United Nations S/PV.7938

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7938th meeting
Monday, 15 May 2017, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Cancela/Mr. Rosselli/Mr. Bermúdez	(Uruguay)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Minami
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Sweden	Mr. Hultqvist
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Sexual violence in conflict

Letter dated 5 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2017/402)

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17-13474 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Sexual violence in conflict

Letter dated 5 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2017/402)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Albania, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Botswana, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Estonia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, the Sudan, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Adama Dieng, Under-Secretary-General and Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, and Ms. Mina Jaf, Founder and Executive Director of Women's Refugee Route.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Mara Marinaki, Principal Adviser on Gender and on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security of the European External Action Service of the European Union; and Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/402, which contains the text of a letter dated 5 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome Her Excellency the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, to whom I now give the floor.

Ms. Mohammed: Let me begin by commending Uruguay, and the Deputy Foreign Minister in particular, for hosting this important event. I also salute the Security Council for its work to combat sexual in conflict, including through the recent adoption of resolution 2331 (2016), which highlights the linkages between conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking in armed conflict and violence and extremism. Allow me also to thank and welcome Ms. Mina Jaf of Iraq, who is in the Chamber today to give voice to civil society as a key partner and compass of our work at the United Nations.

Today's debate takes place at a critical juncture. On the one hand, the deep silence that has traditionally shrouded crimes of sexual violence is finally breaking: there is more visibility, more political will and more momentum. Global understanding of this scourge is increasing. Sexual violence in conflict is no longer seen as merely a women's issue or a lesser evil in a false hierarchy of human rights violations. Instead, it is rightly viewed as a legitimate threat to security and durable peace that requires an operational, security and justice response, in addition to ensuring multidimensional services for survivors of such crimes.

Secretary-General António Guterres has placed priority on prevention. The sexual violence in conflict mandate — through the strategic leadership of successive Special representatives, the engagement of Member States and partnerships between the United Nations family and civil society — shows how timely and reliable information and analysis may be leveraged for prevention.

A robust legislative framework now exists, including a series of precise Security Council resolutions that give us new tools to drive change and progress. We are beginning to see some accountability at the international and national levels. There is a gradual shift from a reality in which it is cost free to rape a woman, child or man in conflict to one where there are consequences for anyone who commits, commands or condones such crimes. We see greater national ownership, leadership and responsibility. More Governments are formally committing to take action. Regional organizations are working in concert with the United Nations to add to this effort. This is all much-needed good news.

However, the truth is that we must confront the deep roots of conflict-related sexual violence that lie in fundamental inequality and discrimination against women in all contexts. Too many women live with the spectre of violence in their daily lives, in their households and in their families. Armed conflict serves only to exacerbate these prevailing conditions. These circumstances have created an enabling environment for widespread and systematic sexual violence in conflict situations around the world, including in South Sudan where it is a weapon of choice and a tactic of war being used to terrorize and persecute populations.

As the report (S/2017/249) of Secretary-General makes clear, we are also confronted by new challenges. Sexual violence is increasingly used as a tactic of terrorism, employed by extremist groups in places such as Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Nigeria and Mali to advance their military, economic and ideological ends. The same litany of horrors echoes across the accounts of the Yazidi captives of Da'esh, Nigerian girls who fled from Boko Haram, the tales of Somali women liberated from Al-Shabaab and depictions of women's lives in northern Mali under the extremist group Ansar Eddine. These groups are using sexual violence for strategic purposes. They are obscenely incentivizing the recruitment of young men through the promise of wives and sex slaves. They are outrageously boosting profiting through the sale, trade and trafficking of women and girls. It is therefore essential that considerations of protecting and empowering women and girls feature in our counter-terrorism and our countering violent extremism architecture.

We face a number of major challenges going forward. Enforcing compliance with international law by non-State armed actors is one of them. The Secretary-General has devoted specific attention to enhancing the process of gaining concrete protection commitments from parties listed annually in his reports on sexual violence and children in armed conflict. Of course, we face unprecedented political and operational challenges, requiring the concerted effort and support of Member States and the entire United Nations system.

The mass migration crisis and massive displacement of populations due to protracted conflicts worldwide has heightened the risk of sexual violence. We see the acute vulnerability of refugees and internally displaced persons not only within camps or settlements, but at every stage of displacement, and how sexual violence may be a significant factor driving vulnerable from their homes and communities.

Let us also acknowledge that the response of the United Nations is undermined by unacceptable allegations and incidents of sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers. The Secretary-General and all of us are determined to tackle this challenge head on, as reflected in the recent report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/71/818), which outlines a strategy for making zero tolerance a reality.

Sexual violence is a uniquely heart-wrenching crime because victims, instead of the perpetrators, often bear the stigma. Those who commit these heinous crimes often escape justice. Meanwhile, their victims are often forced to live with the shame of having been raped and rejected by their families and communities. Worst still, many children are born of rape and sentenced to a life of discrimination, exclusion and stigma. Mental health issues such as depression, flashbacks, challenges in re-establishing intimate relationships, and fear are some of the long-term psychological consequences of this crime. Pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS and other health challenges, are common, and survivors often find themselves doubly victimized.

Last week, I rejoiced with the people of Nigeria and the world at the news of the release of 82 girls held captive for the past three years by Boko Haram. The girls were among a group of 270 schoolgirls kidnapped in Chibok in April 2014. However, thousands are still missing around the world and we must continue to insist relentlessly on their return. It is not enough to bring back our girls. We must bring them back with dignity and respect to an environment of support, equality and

opportunity, and ensure that they are provided with psychosocial counselling, emergency reproductive health care and other critical assistance that helps them reintegrate into their homes and societies.

Victims of conflict-related sexual violence also have a right to comprehensive reparations. This is a critical element of justice due to survivors, as well as an important avenue for recovery. Social and economic reintegration is imperative and must become a more integral part of our reconstruction efforts, transitional justice and post-conflict development frameworks. This is also one of the core commitments articulated in our Sustainable Development Goals, to empower women and girls and eliminate all forms of violence against them.

The Council has played a pivotal role in putting us on a path towards accountability and the prevention of sexual violence, but more is required if we are to eradicate this crime once and for all. The Secretary-General lays out comprehensive recommendations in his report, including with regard to the Council's support for engagement with parties to conflict to gain concrete protection commitments and the accelerated deployment of specialized personnel, such as women protection advisers, which should catalyse the implementation of this agenda on the ground, where it matters most.

We have a solemn responsibility to convert a centuries-old culture of impunity into a culture of accountability and deterrence. We cannot afford to be complacent or lose our focus. We must meet these new challenges on the horizon, and we must keep the international spotlight on this crime, which has historically been left in the shadows. All our words, laws and resolutions will mean absolutely nothing if violations go unpunished in practice and if we fail in our sacred duty of care to survivors.

In word and deed, let us commit to standing in solidarity with survivors and vulnerable communities, and replace horror with hope. This is a litmus test of our commitment and responsibility to protect the most vulnerable populations from the most egregious human rights violations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dieng.

Mr. Dieng: We are here today in the Chamber not just to condemn a problem, but to find ways to change it. In that spirit, I would like to sincerely thank Uruguay for convening this critical debate, and Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohamed; Ms. Mina Jaf, Executive Director of Women's Refugee Route; and all those who will speak today for lending their voices to the search for solutions.

Our efforts to bring this crime out of the shadows and into the centre of peace and security policy has had a powerful normative and operational impact. But such an impact is possible only when the Security Council, Governments, civil society and the United Nations system act in concert and with common purpose.

The annual report of the Secretary-General before us today (S/2017/249) is harrowing in its depiction of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism, as a tool of dehumanization and shame, and as a weapon of punishment and persecution. The report brings to light new dimensions of this scourge, including the use of sexually enslaved women and girls as suicide bombers and human shields or as a form of currency used to compensate fighters and sustain military operations, as if women were expendable resources in the machinery of terrorism.

Behind every number presented in the report there is a story, a face and a name. For instance, Nasima is an Iraqi girl who was so afraid of being killed by her own relatives upon returning from captivity under the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) that she attempted suicide by eating rat poison. There is Sadiya, who was kidnapped by Boko Haram and became pregnant as a result of rape. When she was released, local militia from her own community said they would return to kill her "Koko Haram baby" as soon as it was born. There is the case of Jean from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, who was gang-raped by rebels. He was mocked and ridiculed by his community and accused of homosexuality. And there are many others like him, particularly in the 62 countries that still provide no legal protection for male victims of rape.

Marie, from the Central African Republic, contracted HIV because she was too ashamed to report her rape to a health clinic in time to receive post-exposure prophylaxis. She, like many other victims, is literally dying of shame. Then there is the four-year-old boy who is known to his community as Tonkotonko — a local term meaning the Lord's

Resistance Army (LRA) — because he was conceived when his mother was raped by a commander of the Lord's Resistance Army.

Sexual violence is a crime that can turn victims into social outcasts. It can fracture families and corrode the structures that bind communities. Fear and cultural stigma prevent the vast majority of survivors from ever coming forward. Whether it results in honour crimes, suicide, untreated medical conditions, unsafe abortion, extreme poverty or social exclusion, the consequences can be lethal. Simply stated, stigma kills. Many women, girls, men and boys survive the ordeal of rape, but not its social repercussions. Often, they forego medical and legal help in order to avoid the humiliation and victim-blame that add insult to injury. Shame and stigma are integral to the logic of rape employed as a tactic of war, torture or terrorism. Aggressors understand that this crime attacks individual and collective identity, social relationships and status. As the Deputy Secretary-General noted, there is a need to re-direct the stigma of sexual violence from the victim to the perpetrator. There is a need to recognize survivors as legitimate victims of conflict and terrorism who are entitled to relief, reparations and equality before the law.

The Security Council has once and for all rejected the idea that rape is an inevitable by-product of war. Let us add today that stigma cannot continue as an inevitable by-product of rape. It must be addressed not only as a long-term problem but as an emergency, because lives are at stake. This is both a human rights issue and a security issue. Stigma can tear communities apart. It can perpetuate the vicious cycle of violence, vulnerability and exploitation that prevents recovery. For instance, when children born of rape are socially marginalized and left undocumented and stateless, they may have no other prospects for the future than to join armed or extremist groups that fuel unrest.

Our aim must therefore go beyond merely minimizing stigma, to empowering and restoring respect for survivors. That entails mobilizing the moral authority of traditional and religious leaders to shift harmful social norms, including gendered notions of honour and shame. By transforming perceptions in that way, we can disarm the weapon of rape.

Stigma and victim-blame are compounded by the historical absence of accountability for these crimes. As the report notes, justice can have a cascade effect whereby each verdict inspires another survivor to come forward, and each sentence deters another would-be perpetrator and puts commanders on notice. Over time, that can convert cultures of impunity into cultures of deterrence.

But we need to deliver justice, not just law. That includes restorative, reparative justice, which is what the survivors want most yet receive least. When victims have the chance to tell their stories, to observe the sentencing of offenders and to benefit from solidarity and support, including material and symbolic reparations, it can counteract isolation and self-blame. It tells the community that what happened was not the victim's fault.

In order to foster credible deterrence, justice must be done and be seen to be done, not only in the courtroom but also in the community. These offences need to be part of the official historical record in order to send the signal that no political or military leader is above the law, and no civilian is beneath its protection.

Although we have seen landmark convictions over the past year, such as the Bemba case, which centered on command responsibility for sexual violence and resulted in the longest sentence yet delivered by the International Criminal Court, rape remains among the least-condemned of crimes. Globally, it is far less likely to be reported to the police than any other form of physical assault.

For the survivors who still live in the midst of their attackers, justice delayed is more than justice denied; it is terror and insecurity continued. In other words, slow justice is no justice. How many more rapes are committed while the perpetrators remain at large and the victims wait for the wheels of justice to turn? Let me highlight just three of many such examples.

First, accounts of widespread and systematic sexual violence — including sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced impregnation and the trafficking of women and girls — as a step in the process of destroying the Yazidi community as a whole indicate that we may be living through a genocide. And yet not a single militant of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has faced trial for sexual violence crimes, anywhere in the world. Military solutions are not sufficient. Bullets on the battlefield cannot kill an ideology. We need justice according to law. And we need to ensure that prosecution for rape is not subordinated to other crimes.

Secondly, in South Sudan, pervasive impunity has normalized extreme patterns of violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, which is being committed in a strategic manner that mirrors the fault lines of the wider political and ethnic crisis.

Thirdly, the report notes that certain perpetrators of emblematic mass rape incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to commit rape and other atrocities in 2016. Seven years after the notorious rape of 387 civilians in Walikale, no perpetrator has been tried and no survivor has received reparations. Sheka, the rebel commander responsible, continues to prey on the local populace, disrupting peacebuilding and development efforts. And one local warlord will continue to replace another until there are systems and institutions in place capable of delivering justice and deterrence.

In that respect, it is the primary responsibility of national Governments to protect their people. The United Nations can support, but never supplant, their efforts. The response to sexual violence must be multisectoral and holistic, a fact that successive Special Representatives of the Secretary-General have recognized in their role as Chair of the United Nations Action Network, which unites the expertise of 13 United Nations entities. However, the loss of infrastructure and expertise occasioned by conflict dramatically weakens the response. The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, working out of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, provides technical support to bolster institutional capacity. The report covers progress catalysed by the Team of Experts in settings such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while certain rebel fighters continue to evade arrest, the Government has accorded a new level of seriousness to these crimes and commitment to addressing them, as evident in the prosecution of over 400 members of its national armed forces since 2013.

In Guinea, 17 high-ranking military and political officials have been indicted for crimes of sexual violence committed as a tool of political repression in September 2009, with trials due to commence shortly.

This year also marks the first delisting pursuant to this mandate, namely, that of the Forces armées de Côte d'Ivoire, which provides an instructive example for other armies in terms of meeting the requirements set out in resolutions 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013). They include the adoption of codes of conduct, training, the swift investigation of alleged offences and the establishment of oversight mechanisms. That is part of changing the culture of security institutions in order to ensure they are accessible and responsive to all.

We now have to work with national and regional security bodies to advance the implementation of resolution 2331 (2016), so as to more effectively detect and disrupt trafficking in persons in situations of conflict for the purpose of sexual exploitation. That will require enhanced information-sharing and judicial cooperation. Since sexual violence has become part of the shadow economy of conflict and terrorism, it should be addressed in our global discourse and in our action to curb financial flows to terrorist groups. We must also be conscious of the shrinking space for civil society actors to operate, particularly in contexts affected by violent extremism, and ensure that they are able to access the resources that will enable them to deliver lifesaving services.

The Deputy Secretary-General has emphasized the importance of prevention. We must indeed pay greater attention to the risk factors, or red flags, for conflict-related sexual violence in early-warning and early-response efforts. In addition, we must examine the root causes and enablers of such crimes, including the links between economic and physical insecurity. The majority of survivors come from marginalized, destitute or displaced communities whose lives and livelihoods have been devastated by war. Socioeconomic reintegration support — including for women and girls who have escaped the grip of ISIL, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and other violent extremist groups — must therefore be part of all of our peacebuilding and recovery efforts.

Peace begins with peace of mind. Those who have been liberated from sexual slavery should never again face the prison of stigma, a fate that some have described as a living death. They should receive psychosocial, livelihood and legal support; they should be recognized as victims, not shunned as affiliates or children of bad blood; and they should not be treated as intelligence assets by the State. Peacebuilding and reconciliation depend on empowering survivors and their families so that they can participate in their nations' economic and social recovery. We have the tools. We have the resolutions. We now need sustained political resolve and resources equal to the scale of the challenge.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Dieng for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Jaf.

Ms. Jaf: I was born a refugee during a chemical-gas attack in Kurdistan. Thanks to my mother, I was also born a feminist. After spending the first 15 years of my life in camps and asylum centres, I am now dedicating my life to working with and empowering other refugee women and girls. I am speaking today in my capacity as founder and Director of Women's Refugee Route and on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. I am speaking here in complete safety. Yet many displaced women and girls do not have that luxury, especially since one in five of them have been raped or experienced other forms of sexual violence.

Sexual violence is a gender crime used to shame, demonstrate power and reinforce gender norms. It sustains fear and insecurity. The stigma associated with sexual violence prevents many survivors from reporting abuse, accessing medical and psychosocial services and seeking justice. I want to focus on the need for gender-sensitive support for refugees and the critical importance of empowering refugee women. I also want to highlight the urgent need for programmes that cater to all populations at risk, including refugees with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals, and men and boys.

More than 65 million people around the world have been displaced from their homes as a result of persecution, conflict or human rights violations, often intensified by the flow of arms. In times of crisis, women and girls are at a heightened risk for all forms of gender-based violence, from rape to assault, domestic violence and early marriage, as well as exploitation by smugglers. Displaced women and girls also experience disruptions to their education and livelihoods and often have to take drastic measures to survive. Women have told me that they have engaged in prostitution for as little as a couple of euros in order to be able to feed their families. One woman in particular has stayed in my heart — she was the same age as me and had to sell her body to buy milk for her baby.

I founded my organization when I realized that international humanitarian responses to refugee populations were largely gender-blind. For example, a woman I worked with at a refugee processing centre wanted to report her violent husband. I went with her to help translate for her, but the shelter insisted that she speak using their interpreter, who was a man. She did not feel comfortable doing that and cancelled the meeting. In every refugee setting I have worked in, there is a huge lack of trained women interpreters, volunteers and specialized service providers for dealing with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and a lack of understanding of the ways in which services must be adapted if they are to be gender-sensitive.

The fear of stigmatization and of breaches of confidentiality also compound access issues. I met a 17-year-old woman who had fled the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and been raped by soldiers at a border crossing. She left her family so that she would not have to tell them what had happened, and continued on her own. She was too scared and ashamed to report the rape and so received no medical assistance until she reached her final destination in Northern Europe, where she gave birth. That is despite the fact that international humanitarian law says that donor aid must be delivered in a non-discriminatory manner that includes access to sexual and reproductive health care such as abortion. In Greece, I urged a 16-year-old unaccompanied minor from Afghanistan who had been gang-raped to report it and thereby get access to services. She refused, asking me what the point of reporting it was if the system would not protect her.

It is also very urgent that we address the protection needs of groups that are at risk. I recently met a refugee woman in a wheelchair who had to struggle even to maintain basic hygiene. She could not lock the shower once her wheelchair was in it, and she was too scared to take a shower when the door was open. The tools and guidelines to protect displaced women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence already exist. We need the political will to consistently implement them.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex refugees, because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, face an increased risk of discrimination and violence compared to the larger refugee population. Many flee persecution, but subsequently do not disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status to service providers out of fear of becoming the victim of more violence. Moreover, notions of masculinity prevent abused and at-risk men from admitting their vulnerabilities to sexual violence and from seeking support. My colleagues who work with refugee men also talk of the challenges encountered in getting those who were raped to report it. They say they need to "remain men".

Time and time again, I see humanitarian agencies working to implement standardized programmes instead of adapting responses to the survivor's concerns and needs. Yet, not all refugee camps and protection programmes are the same. Those where refugee women have been consulted in designing and implementing protection strategies are much safer. Refugee women are resilient. They have survived the unimaginable. When empowered to advocate for themselves and to be part of the decision-making on providing a safe environment and work opportunities, refugee women become the bedrock of peaceful and sustainable communities. Investing in women and women's organizations that support empowerment is critical.

Sexual violence in conflict does not happen in a vacuum. It is the result of systematic failures on the part of the international community to address the root cause of conflict, gender inequality and impunity. That must end. I call on the Security Council and all Member States to undertake the following: promote gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment as fundamental to all efforts to prevent and address sexual violence in conflict and support women's organizations working on the front lines; join and support the Call To Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies; ensure that the Global Compact on Refugees, to be completed in 2018, is progressive in meeting the needs of refugee women and girls; uphold the rights of all refugees by urgently improving access to international protection through humanitarian visas, increasing refugee resettlements, granting greater access to information and fair hearings; ensure that aid complies with international humanitarian law and is not subject to donor limitations, including the denial of sexual and reproductive health care, such as abortions; commit to programmes that are informed by gender analysis, meet the needs of all survivors and include sex- and age-disaggregated data, which must involve gender-sensitive training on working with survivors for all field workers and including survivors in consultations on their individual protection strategies; lastly, curb the flows of small arms by ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty and implementing it through enforced national laws and regulations.

It is not enough to condemn acts of sexual violence in conflict. Everyone here today is responsible for putting an end to such violence, bringing all the perpetrators to justice and putting women at the front and centre of all responses to prevent it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Jal for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay.

It is an honour for me to preside over this debate, and it is the wish of Uruguay to express its thanks to everyone who has come here today to address a theme that requires our constant attention and which is an essential part of the agenda on women and peace and security. This is an agenda to which we adhere, and we endorse the statement to be delivered by Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

Uruguay decided to convene this open debate in the conviction that sexual violence constitutes one of the worst attacks against human dignity. In the framework of international human rights law, sexual violence is also a direct attack on dignity. It is an attack on the right to freedom and honour and, of course, an attack on the right to life. We should recall that, under the definition in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, sexual violence carried out by the State itself is to be considered as torture.

On the basis of resolution 1325 (2000) and other resolutions and complementary documents, we have strengthened the normative framework so as to address that problem. Despite all those efforts, however, it is a matter of concern to read the contents of the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) indicating the ongoing nature of sexual violence, which is used by terrorist groups, violent extremists, non-State armed groups and also by some State actors.

Sexual violence used systematically becomes a tactic of war and an act of terrorism, manifesting itself through abhorrent practices, which include rape, sexual slavery, prostitution, forced marriage, as well as pregnancies, abortions and forced sterilization. In the context of a conflict situation, we know that the systematic, organized and even planned use of sexual violence, directed especially against the most vulnerable groups of the civilian population, constitutes barbaric tools, which have been developed by terrorist groups such as Da'esh, Boko Haram, Al-Nusra and Al-Shabaab. Sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism thus becomes a lethal weapon of war. It causes physical harm but, even worse, it attacks what is most

valuable to human beings: their dignity. It destroys and dehumanizes women, girls, boys and men.

Victims who have suffered the effects of sudden sexual violence require, where possible, a long and costly recuperation, which has a direct impact on the social fabric, economic development, family life and on everything that depends on civil society for its development. The long-term costs of the use of sexual violence in conflicts are much deeper and more complex than they may at first appear. Once again, we in the Organization find ourselves confirming the fact that prevention and early warning is where we must focus our efforts to prevent the occurrence of such undesirable acts and all of their costly ramifications.

For those reasons, given the gravity and complexity of the problem, the international community must produce swift, coordinated and comprehensive responses. Uruguay supports the suggestions contained in the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence and considers them appropriate.

First, empowering women is essential. The common denominator of sexual violence is that it finds fertile ground where there are pre-existing patterns of structural discrimination based on gender. Women must therefore have access to education and employment and must participate in decision-making processes in order to reaffirm their integrity and value as human beings.

We reiterate that there must be increased participation by women in the areas of mediation, prevention and conflict resolution, as highlighted in resolution 1325 (2000). Their capacity for rapprochement, negotiation, understanding and empathy in such situations is more than proven. Uruguay firmly believes that. The increase in the number of women in peacekeeping operations in which Uruguay participates has enriched the quality of the contingents. In missions such as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we can attest to the effective role of women in creating confidence in local communities, for reasons already mentioned, and, furthermore, in individuals who have been victims of sexual violence.

Secondly, as mentioned at the beginning, attention must be paid to the recovery and reintegration of victims. Victims require a minimum support that involves medical and psychosocial care, including sexual and reproductive health care. Although at the beginning I mentioned that the main victims of sexual violence are women, girls, boys and adolescents, men too are victims. Civil society as a whole is a group vulnerable to the aberrant practice. Rape, enforced sterilization, the transmission of AIDS, genital violence and castration are all forms of sexual violence that are used as weapons of war and terrorism. The humiliation and social rejection suffered by victims is a responsibility that Governments, civil society organizations and community and religious leaders must bear in mind and attend to with all the appropriate means in order to be able to effectively mend the social fabric.

Similarly, girls and boys born of war and produced by sexual violence — by women being raped — are invisible victims, who from the time they are born are denied another fundamental human right: the right to a name. As mentioned today, in many cases girls and boys born of rape are considered to be children of the enemy and face a life of rejection and exclusion. They continue to be denied fundamental rights and to be deprived of access to basic services such as medical care and education. Nonetheless, those girls and boys are also members of society, and steps must be taken for their education, integration, inclusion and social acceptance so as to prevent a vicious circle that perpetuates violence.

Thirdly, we believe that these crimes must be condemned because accountablility is fundamental to ensuring that they do not go unpunished. They must not remain unpunished. We cannot forget that memory, truth, justice and the adoption of new legal, cultural and social changes, among others, are the links in the only chain than can guarantee that events that lead to conflict do not recur and that at the same time can restore dignity to the victims.

We States must increase our efforts to ensure that those who are guilty of such crimes are brought to justice, at both the domestic and international levels. In that regard, the International Criminal Court plays an essectial role in judging those crimes that have been recognized by the Rome Statute as war crimes, crimes against humanity or even crimes of genocide. In addition, let us recall that the use of sexual violence in conflicts is also considered to be a risk factor indicator in the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, a document issued in 2014 by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. It is therefore up to the Security Council to ensure that crimes of sexual violence are referred to the International Criminal Court and that such cases continue to be monitored. The Security Council must

also ensure that the theme of sexual violence is addressed in all of the relevant sanctions committees and that the names of the alleged perpetrators of sexual violence are systematically included on their sanctions lists.

In the context of peacekeeping operations, we believe that addressing sexual violence in conflict is an essential part of protecting civilians and a fundamental aspect of the mandate of such operations. As such, all available means must be employed in furtherance of and in defence of such mandates.

Uruguay wishes to express its support for the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, in particular its efforts to end impunity for such crimes. We deeply appreciate the positive impact of the roster of legal experts from UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response, who have worked with United Nations bodies and States to promote accountability in cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

It can be concluded that a fragmented approach is not an appropriate response to sexual violence used as a tactic of war and terrorism in conflict. The isolated efforts of one country or groups of countries, civil society or the organs and agencies of this Organization are not enough to eradicate it. Only concerted action will allow us to respond effectively to that terrible scourge.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister of Defence of Sweden.

Mr. Hultqvist (Sweden): I first wish to thank Mr. Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their excellent introductions and briefings.

Of all the evil acts that take place in conflict settings, sexual violence may be the one that casts the longest shadow. The lives of victims are changed forever. Besides the physical scars that the victims bear, they will carry the hidden trauma and stigma for the rest of their lives. We can see that the use of sexual violence in conflicts destroys societies, families and community structures, as its goal is to dominate and control the society concerned. Therefore, every effort must be taken to end sexual violence in conflict, and I thank Uruguay for organizing this open debate on the topic.

We would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General and the acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for their insightful and, sadly, very troubling accounts of sexual violence in conflict settings.

Let me also thank Ms. Bangura, the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her strong leadership during her tenure, and welcome the incoming Special Representative, Ms. Patten. She has our strong support. We also express our thanks to the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. Sexual violence in any situation is a crime, but conflict-related sexual violence is also a core security challenge that must be kept on the Council's agenda. Why? Because the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism has not stopped. On the contrary, sexual violence, human trafficking and the exploitation of vulnerable persons through modern slavery in the midst of migration are growing trends worldwide.

We must move from expressing outrage to taking decisive action. The following are some concrete measures that the Security Council and each Member State can undertake.

First, they can apply a comprehensive rights-based approach focused on the needs and experiences of victims. Ensuring human rights, especially the right to freedom from violence and to sexual and reproductive health and rights, remains essential. Sexual violence in all its forms is prohibited in armed conflict under international humanitarian law. Perpetrators must be held accountable.

Secondly, they can make conflict-related sexual violence a priority issue in monitoring the implementation of Security Council mandates. To that end, we need improved data, including sex-disaggregated statistics, as well as accurate accounts. That is why we strongly welcome briefings by civil society to the Council, such as that made by Ms. Mina Jaf today. We also welcome the use of conclusions submitted by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the summaries of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security.

Thirdly, the Council and Member States can use all of the Council's tools to combat sexual violence in conflict, including sanctions. Resolution 2339 (2017) on the Central African Republic introduced the first-ever separate designation criteria on conflict-related sexual

violence in a sanctions regime. Let us work to include similar criteria in all relevant sanctions regimes.

Fourthly, the numbers of women peacekeepers, police and correction officers should be increased. The evidence for their greater inclusion is compelling. With more female peacekeepers and female police officers we reach the whole population in a conflict area and become more efficient in operations. There is a clear need for more female leaders in executive positions. Sweden is working to meet the target of 15 per cent women military observers and staff officers in its contingents by December 2017. Sweden actively promotes the agenda for women and peace and security and has had a national action plan in place for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) since 2006. In its work Sweden seeks to actively ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into all international operations in conflict and post-conflict countries. That ambition must be integrated into all peace and security efforts.

Women and peace and security is an integral part of pre-deployment preparations for all Swedish troops, and all deployed contingents have specially trained gender advisers. Furthermore, the United Nations must be trusted in order to be effective. That is why, in this context, it is key to implement expeditiously the Secretary-General's approach to eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse committed by men and women working for the United Nations.

Fifthly, a gender perspective should be integrated throughout counter-terrorism work in line with Security Council resolution 2242 (2015). Sexual violence, whether it is politically or religiously motivated, is totally unacceptable in any situation and is a crime. In addition, resolution 2331 (2016) highlights that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, and are used as a tactic of terrorism.

Clear political leadership is needed at all levels to change norms in society. It can encourage female victims of sexual violence to speak out. Indeed, we have seen only the tip of the iceberg. Low levels of reporting are a sign of stigma and failed systems. High numbers are a step in the right direction towards tackling the problem. It is important that we break the silence regarding sexual violence in conflict, thereby making it visible and not shameful, and making it part of peace negotiations, reconciliation and transitional justice.

Real leadership and engagement must also come from political leaders, military commanders, elders, judges, community leaders, teachers and peer-to-peer counsellors. I am proud to be a Minister in a feminist Government. All leaders have a duty to challenge sexist views and violent behaviour and attitudes towards women and children. The responsibility to address and speak up is greater for those of us in male-dominated sectors, such as defence and security. We are working actively within the Swedish Armed Forces to educate our own troops as well as troops from other countries. We are ready to share our experiences.

We cannot spare any effort in combating these evil acts. Only by shining a light on this issue can we lift the long shadow of sexual violence in conflict for the survivors and prevent another generation from falling victim. We all can, and must, improve.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed and Acting Special Representative Dieng for their powerful briefings this morning. We are also honoured by Ms. Jaf's presence in the Security Council today, and we deeply appreciate her moving and inspirational testimony on behalf of the women, men, girls and boys who have suffered from sexual violence in conflict. As a voice for civil society, her voice is important for all of us to hear.

In December 2016, the Security Council adopted resolution 2331 (2016), condemning sexual violence and trafficking in persons committed by terrorists and armed groups. The resolution reflected a sobering truth about conflict today: rape is a weapon of war. Fighters are not just using guns, mortars and rockets in their battles; what we see now is a systematic use of rape to decimate communities and to force them to surrender or to flee. It is a sick and twisted reality.

The reports of rape and sexual violence from conflict zones are shocking, but they have yet to move the Security Council to act in response. That is why reports of sexual violence in conflict continue and even grow year after year. In order to fully implement resolution 2331 (2016) and help end these atrocities, we as a Council should focus on three things.

First, we should consistently recognize and condemn the impact of sexual violence on international peace and security. In South Sudan, for example, in December 2016, United Nations human rights investigators said that rape was being used as a tool

for ethnic cleansing and that sexual violence in South Sudan had reached "epic proportions". In January 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that refugees arriving from the Equatoria region of South Sudan had cited rape and sexual abuse of women and girls as one of their primary reasons for fleeing. There were even reports that militias and armed groups were using rape as a sort of tax to be paid by female refugees fleeing the country.

Where rape is being used as a tactic of war, it is often public and committed in front of mass audiences, including family members and children. One refugee from South Sudan, when describing what happened to her while trying to escape the conflict, said:

> "We hired a driver to take us to the Oraba border point. When we reached Kimba, there were two soldiers. They told the women to get out, to remove their clothes and lie down. The children saw their mothers get raped."

Clearly, the motive behind these horrific public rapes is to terrorize entire communities and to traumatize future generations. There can be no doubt that in South Sudan the epidemic of rape and sexual assault exacerbates the threat to international peace and security.

Secondly, in responding to sexual violence, the Security Council must seek to hold those responsible accountable for their actions and call on Member States to ensure that victims and survivors receive comprehensive care, as has been noted by other speakers. Unfortunately, we know that the overwhelming majority of victims and survivors may never receive justice. Just as armed conflict can destroy societies, it can also destroy the very institutions that should hold those responsible to account, and, in some places, the police who are supposed to investigate sexual violence are actually reported as the perpetrators.

Rebuilding courts and reforming law enforcement are never easy tasks, but we need to give victims of sexual violence access to justice; otherwise the deep scars caused by rape in armed conflict will be difficult if not impossible to heal. We appreciate that, even with a relatively small team, the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict has travelled to conflict zones to engage Governments and negotiate agreements intended to curb such attacks. That work, while it may take time, is vital.

We are also encouraged that the Council recognizes that victims and survivors face challenges in accessing the medical, psychosocial and economic support they need to rebuild their lives. In March, for example, our resolution on the conflict in the Lake Chad basin (resolution 2349 (2017)) included a strong call for Governments and humanitarian partners to provide rapid access for medical and social services for victims of sexual violence. Survivors need such access to heal and to reintegrate into society.

Thirdly, and finally, I call upon members of the Security Council to set an example for the international community by advancing the women and peace and security agenda at home and in their engagement abroad. As the President of the Council noted, we know that an essential element of preventing sexual violence in the first place starts with empowering women to be leaders in building and maintaining peace.

For our part, the United States will not waver in its commitment to ending sexual violence in conflict, provide care for victims and hold perpetrators accountable. We will continue to work with our friends and allies to address this scourge, and we call on all States Members of the United Nations to join us in this vital endeavour.

I agree with Mina Jaf that it is not enough to simply condemn acts of sexual violence in conflict; she is right: everyone here today is responsible for ending it and for bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We are also very grateful that the Deputy Secretary-General has been able to join us this morning.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like first of all to thank Uruguay for organizing today's debate in the Security Council. This subject is of central importance for countries in conflict, of course, but also for all of us. I would like to also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng for their briefings and their exemplary commitment. Lastly, I wish to give special thanks to Ms. Mina Jaf. Allow me to underscore the importance of the presence and interventions of civil society representatives in the Security Council, particularly in the context of the women and peace and security agenda. The voice of stakeholders on the ground is indeed irreplaceable.

Today's debate affords me the opportunity to convey France's sincere thanks to Ms. Zainab Bangura, who discharged her duties as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict with energy, passion and determination over the past few years. We also welcome the nomination of Ms. Pramila Patten for that position, and we count on her to carry on that essential mandate. The mandate of the Special Representative is one of the priorities of France's diplomacy. We reaffirm our support of the Office of the Special Representative, particularly of its Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. The work of that Team to strengthen national capabilities in combatting sexual violence is essential both with regard to preventing and combating impunity and supporting the victims of such violence.

Since the seminal adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), this Council has placed the participation of women in crisis management and recovery at the centre of its concerns, with the full support of France. Beyond the agenda on women and peace and security, the question of sexual violence in conflict is taking a growing place in our work. At Spain's initiative, last December we also adopted resolution 2331 (2016), which, taking full account of the link between human trafficking, sexual violence and terrorism, is a great step forward for the Council.

Despite our efforts, in many theatres of conflict women continue to be the primary victims of large-scale, often systematic, sexual violence. Actions committed by Da'esh or Boko Haram show the most extreme forms of such violence, which particularly targets women and children. For those terrorist groups, sexual violence is a weapon of war, but also a source of financing and a recruitment tool. In Syria, rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery and prostitution particularly threaten women and adolescents, especially in regions controlled by Da'esh. In Iraq, Da'esh has set up a marketplace where women and girls from minority groups, including Yezidis and Christians, are sold into sexual slavery.

The large-scale abductions of girls and women by Boko Haram in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria, go hand in hand with the systematic practice of sexual violence, the most common being rape. The abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls in the spring of 2014 — 82 of whom were freed a week ago — brought into broad daylight a common practice of that terrorist group and others, used for intimidation and propaganda and as recruitment strategy, but also as favoured instrument of their ideology.

Boko Haram, Da'esh and other groups like Al-Shabaab in Somalia have integrated those practices into their doctrine and strategy. Those acts, which are morally revolting to the human conscience, can legally be classified as war crimes, crimes against humanity and even genocide. The members of terrorist groups who organize and commit such acts should be held to account in due course. We cannot accept that such crimes remain unpunished.

Beyond terrorist groups, sexual violence is used on a large scale as a weapon of war by armed groups or forces, for example in South Sudan and in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also in northwestern Central African Republic. Far from being a matter of individual cases or the acts of lost soldiers, in many regions sexual violence is a means to terrorize populations or as an instrument of collective punishment against ethnic or religious groups. Its primary target is women, but is also used against children and men.

In the face of those odious acts, indignation is not enough — we must act. The international community is not condemned to impotence. National authorities, which have the lion's share of the responsibility to stamp out sexual violence, can and must make a difference. Therefore I commend the decisive action of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire that enabled the country to be removed from the list annexed to the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2017/249). This first delisting must open the way to others. I know that the teams of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General are continuing their efforts in that respect.

The prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence in their corresponding national jurisdictions, as in the case of Guinea, is also an encouraging sign. So is the growing mobilization of international criminal jurisdictions, including the first decision by the International Criminal Court, on 21 June last year, that recognized the use of rape and sexual violence as war crimes in a Central African Republic case, for acts committed in 2002 and 2003. But those successes in the fight against sexual violence in conflict are still too infrequent. We must strengthen our efforts and take more systematic action by mobilizing around several specific priorities.

The first priority is the fight against impunity. Everything must be done so that those responsible for sexual violence be prosecuted by the competent national jurisdiction and, failing that, by international criminal jurisdictions. In that regard, when prosecution is impossible in the short term, we must ensure that a mechanism is set in place for documenting such crimes. In Syria, the International Independent Investigation Commission and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 can play that indispensable role, as the latter also seeks to facilitate investigation and prosecution of alleged perpetrators of such crimes.

Similarly, as underlined in resolution 2331 (2016), the sanctions regimes in question could more effectively target groups and individuals responsible for sexual violence, especially when those acts are used by terrorist groups as a source of financing or a means of recruitment. Other initiatives are also to be commended, for example the partnership between UN-Women and the Justice Rapid Response initiative, which seeks to train sexual violence experts to serve as a pool of personnel that could be immediately deployed in the framework of investigation mechanisms.

The second priority is prevention. The risk of sexual violence must be fully incorporated into any crisis-prevention mechanism. Such violence is often a sign of the deterioration of the political and security situation in a given zone or country. As such, it calls for a rapid reaction, which means that we must have appropriate detection means, including in peacekeeping operations.

The third priority is support for national authorities in their efforts to prevent, combat and persecute sexual violence, as well as to provide medical and social support to its victims. Strengthening the capacities of countries concerned means pursuing bilateral cooperation and enhancing support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Taking that dimension into account in the framework of peacekeeping operations should also help. We must be mindful of this matter when mandates are renewed, but also ensure that posts for counsellors on gender-based and sexual violence are provided and adequately funded.

I also note that supporting national authorities must go hand in hand with the more support for those within civil society who combat sexual violence and help its victims. Last month's assassination in South Kivu of Dr. Gildo Byamungu Magaju is a tragic reminder of that. In that connection, we urgently call on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue to effectively ensure the safety of Dr. Denis Mukwege.

The fourth priority is to ensure that both peacekeeping operations and national operations under a Security Council mandate are exemplary. France, for whom that is the intangible policy, unreservedly supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. We welcome his renewed ambition in that regard, as evidenced by his proposals to enhance the response of the United Nations, as stated in his March report.

At the national level, we have established an active prevention policy, particularly through training our deployed staff and effective investigation mechanisms. The competent national jurisdictions are systematically and immediately seized in the event of an allegation. Furthermore, we actively support the work of the International Criminal Court in that regard.

The final priority is the determination to include the fight against sexual violence within a comprehensive approach to the issue of gender equality in conflicts. We cannot isolate sexual violence from the situation of women in the societies concerned or from their presence in crisis-management processes. We must therefore include our efforts to prevent and combat sexual violence within the broader framework set out in the Council's women and peace and security agenda. That requires the strengthening of the role of women in crisis prevention and peacekeeping-operations mechanisms and in the political processes of mediation and crisis resolution.

Faced with the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism, the international community must demonstrate its absolute determination. Rest assured that France will do the same.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): Ukraine appreciates Uruguay's initiative in holding this very important open debate. We also appreciate the fact that you, Sir, are presiding over the debate, and we welcome you back to the United Nations. We would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her introduction. We are equally grateful to the other two briefers for their valuable insights, especially the civil-

society perspective. I am also pleased to recognize the participation of the Minister for Defence of Sweden.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Pramila Patten on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We wish her every success. Ukraine also reiterates its full support for that important mandate and the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. Ukraine also reaffirms its firm backing of the zero-tolerance policy regarding all forms of sexual violence and stands in solidarity with the victims and survivors of such crimes.

While my delegation aligns itself with the statement of the European Union to be delivered later today, I would like to make a number of points in my national capacity.

In conflicts around the world women and girls, as well as men and boys, are subjected to horrendous acts of sexual violence. Those acts — rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage and sexual torture — constitute abhorrent violations of human rights and human dignity. Yet, as the Secretary-General's recent thematic report (S/2017/249) states, their scope remains at an alarming level.

The pervasive nature of this horrible phenomenon makes it imperative for us, the international community, to double down on fighting the scourge. Designing prevention policies, ensuring accountability for perpetrators and providing adequate support and rehabilitation for victims must be part and parcel of any conflict-resolution endeavour.

In that light Ukraine, as the country that pioneered the issue of prevention and initiated the relevant process in the Human Rights Council, fully supports the Secretary-General's approach that "[t]he prevention of sexual violence is an integral part of wider conflict prevention" (*S/2017/249, para. 4*).

We also strongly believe that accountability for sexual violence in conflict is needed not only in order to meet the demand for justice, but also to help societies in breaking the cycles of conflict. Perpetrators of sexual violence must, without any regard for their affiliation or rank, be brought to account.

In situations where the justice sector is ill-functioning, survivors who have gone through the trauma of sexual assault too often face additional risks, such as rejection by their families and communities, double victimization by State authorities, limited access to health services and so on. The list, unfortunately, is too long. We must not let them experience all of that.

What is also badly needed is a fully integrated approach aimed at addressing deeply rooted gender inequalities, as sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations is reflective of broader, unequal gender relations in the societies concerned.

In violent conflict, rape is frequently used to harm, humiliate and shame. As already noted, sexual violence is unique in that it often stigmatizes the victim, rather than the perpetrator of the outrage. Owing to that and other factors, such crimes remain significantly underreported. It is known, thanks to the United Nations, that for each rape reported in connection with conflict, 10 to 20 cases will likely remain undocumented. We should work to break that shameful trend.

Social- and economic-reintegration support for the victims is imperative. Children born of rape need particular attention. We must also support men and boys who have suffered sexual violence and live with life-long traumas. The needs of survivors should therefore be addressed across legal, psychological, social, medical and other vital spheres.

Unfortunately, Ukraine is also affected by conflict as a result of the ongoing Russian aggression. Among other serious consequences, we have seen an increase in cases of sexual violence. That has been reported in particular in the 37-page thematic report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine, which I have here.

According to the report, in the territory controlled by armed groups supported by Russia, sexual violence is used to compel people in detention to hand over property. Performing sex acts is also often an explicit condition for being set free. The report includes specific recommendations to the Government of Ukraine, illegal armed groups and the Russian Federation, as well as the international community, aimed at preventing sexual violence, improving response and ensuring justice for survivors. Ukrainian authorities are committed to act upon those recommendations. For one, we are ready to enhance cooperation in that area with the appropriate international organizations and mechanisms, first of all with the United Nations. We will also make full use of our national human rights strategy and its action plan, as well as of the national plan on women and peace and

security. The adoption of all of those documents was highly praised by the OHCHR.

I would also like to inform the Council that we have invited, and look forward to the visit to Ukraine next month of, a UN-Women delegation headed by Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka. Moreover, we reiterate our call to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to monitor the situation in Ukraine's conflict-affected areas within her mandated activities.

But what about Russia and the terrorists it controls and sponsors in my country? The recent case of the sexual harassment of a female patrol member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in the non-Government-controlled area of the Donetsk region, as reported by the Mission on 6 May, is unfortunately illustrative of the problem. I wish to briefly quote an excerpt from the relevant OSCE report.

> "The [Mission] continued monitoring the disengagement areas near Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske. Its access remained restricted there and elsewhere, including in an incident in which an armed man sexually harassed a female patrol member ... A man armed with an assault rifle (AK-47) sexually harassed a female patrol member and threatened to stop the patrol from moving east ... until his demands were met."

We are appalled by the fact that there has been no reaction whatsoever to that disgusting incident on the part of the militants' leaders and sponsors. That reflects their general approach to abuses. No reaction to the shooting down of OSCE unmanned vehicles; no reaction to restrictions on the OSCE's freedom of movement; and now — sexual harassment of OSCE personnel. The prevailing environment of impunity abets the violators, allowing them to feel free to do whatever they want.

We join the States participating in the OSCE and its Special Monitoring Mission in resolutely condemning that incident, and we demand a swift and unequivocal response. If such things happen to international observers, one can only imagine the extent of lawlessness and abuse committed against ordinary residents of the territories under the control of the illegal armed groups and their Russian sponsors.

The road to eliminating sexual violence is long and thorny. Still, we believe that the world can change — and has changed — the way in which that crime is perceived and understood, the manner in which we respond to it, as well as how we treat and support survivors. The United Nations, and the Council in particular, have to spearhead this endeavour.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Let me start by expressing appreciation to you, Sir, for organizing this open debate and for being here again to highlight the great significance of the meeting today. I wish to thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their insightful briefings. It also gives me pleasure to welcome the Defence Minister of Sweden, and I thank him for being at this meeting. At a time when the number of victims of sexual violence targeted by parties to armed conflicts and terrorists is on the rise, this debate could not be more appropriate and relevant in the endeavour to mobilize efforts for concerted and effective international action aimed at preventing and responding to this growing problem.

The annual report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, which was issued last month, with its thorough analysis of current trends and emerging concerns regarding sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism, certainly provides a useful framework for our discussion. Sexual exploitation and abuse have indeed become rampant in various conflict and post-conflict operations and are often linked to other grave crimes, such as killings and the recruitment and use of child soldiers. It has also been used as a tactic of war by armed groups, particularly extremist and terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, to terrorize the civilian population and achieve strategic objectives. Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in countries in conflict, including children, have in many instances been subjected to conflict-related sexual violence, and it should be remembered that such acts are considered war crimes under international law.

The report of the Secretary-General and the recommendations contained therein could form an important basis for addressing sexual violence in various conflict and post-conflict situations. They will have particular significance in the consideration of specific conflict or post-conflict situations, and the Council should explore the ways and means of ensuring the implementation of the relevant recommendations,

including by assigning protection advisers. The Council should encourage or pressure, as appropriate, all parties to an armed conflict to fully comply with international humanitarian law, particularly in relation to the protection of civilians. The implementation by Member States of the relevant regional and international legal instruments for the prevention, punishment and eradication of all forms of violence against women would also contribute to better national, regional and international responses to victims of sexual violence. The need to enhance the capacity of peacekeeping missions to prevent conflict-related sexual violence — particularly through increased participation by women in peacekeeping, the provision of gender-sensitive predeployment training on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, and the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy — has already been recognized, as has the need to involve women and other vulnerable groups in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Where serious violations have occurred, the individuals or groups responsible for such grave violations of international humanitarian law should certainly be held accountable, as allowing impunity is no less a crime. It is important to strengthen peacebuilding efforts aimed at rebuilding national capacity and institutions, particularly the capacity of the security sector and the judiciary to fight impunity and bring perpetrators to justice. However, what is needed in order to sustainably prevent sexual exploitation and violence is to address the root causes of conflict. That applies, of course, to all of the crimes and inhumane acts that usually follow violent conflicts. Moreover, as the Deputy Secretary-General stressed, in our efforts to ensure success in the fight against sexual exploitation and violence, we must never overlook what takes place at the family and societal levels, since that lays the foundation for what takes place, in a more egregious manner, during times of violence.

We believe that enhancing global and regional partnerships in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence should form an important part of the international response in conflict and post-conflict situations. In that connection, the African Union has demonstrated its commitment to fighting impunity and holding accountable those responsible for conflict-related sexual violence. The joint efforts of the United Nations and the African Union are imperative, not only in the fight against sexual exploitation and violence in conflicts but also in supporting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda on the continent. The close cooperation and coordination provided by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission are important, and the implementation of the framework for cooperation between the two organizations will go a long way towards ensuring greater coordination of efforts.

Finally, with regard to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers, we reiterate our strong condemnation of all such acts throughout the United Nations system and reaffirm our commitment to support the implementation of the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to preventing and combating such abuses. We support the measures he is undertaking, including through the appointment of the special coordinator and the establishment of a high-level task force to develop a strategy for improving the United Nations response.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for holding this important debate. We also extend our thanks to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and to all of the briefers for their valuable contributions.

This year's report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence was issued after the adoption, last December, of resolution 2331 (2016), the first Security Council resolution on human trafficking in situations of armed conflict. That report condemns all of the aims of human trafficking, including sexual exploitation, which in most cases are being pursued by extremist terrorist groups that seek to terrorize civilians and/or generate revenue by enslaving women and girls, in particular those belonging to ethnic or racial minorities, and by selling those women like goods at the market. In that connection, Egypt would like to make the following points.

First, it is crucial that the reports of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence respect the limits and duration of the mandates assigned by the Council in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Secondly, we support the efforts aimed at promoting the contributions of women in decision-making and political processes through investments in training and capacity-building programmes, as well as

the documentation and spread of information on the contributions that women are able to make in peacekeeping operations. Since 2009, Egypt has made political and military contributions through our female staff deployed on mission in the Sudan and Western Sahara, as well as in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

Thirdly, it is important to bear sexual violence in mind in the national training of peacekeeping staff. In that regard, the regional centre in Cairo has worked to promote the resolution of conflict and the maintenance of peace in Africa, in coordination with the Egyptian Defence Ministry. The centre addresses the fight against sexual violence in conflict in meetings for Egyptian personnel prior to their deployment to United Nations peacekeeping forces. Since that element was included in the training curriculum, 3,600 staff of all ranks have been trained. The centre has also organized 12 basic courses on the concept of gender in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. These sessions have been offered to some 3,600 military, police and civilian staff.

Fourthly, we welcome the measures taken by the United Nations to address sexual violence in armed conflict, including an increase in the number of women protection advisers in the field. It is essential that we consolidate and build on national institutional capacities and launch the United Nations initiative to combat sexual violence.

Fifthly, we are committed to the Secretary-General's policy of zero tolorance for crimes of sexual exploitation. We are pursuing our work with the Security Council and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to end all violence against women in peacekeeping operations. We also expect the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to pursue the efforts of his or her predecessor in the context of the Special Representative's mandate to resolve issues of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations or other forces deployed under the United Nations flag.

Sixthly, we welcome the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, particularly with respect to strengthening the capacity of States in armed conflict or in the post-conflict period in criminal investigations, military justice, the preparation of witnesses and the provision of compensation to victims. It is also important to pool international efforts to assist religious and national leaders in raising the awareness of communities of the need to reject stereotypes and to fight the stigmatization of victims of sexual violence, thereby ensuring that the terrorists and extremists will lose the ideological battle and fail in their attempts to legitimize rape from a religious point of view. We know the role played by religious leaders against fatwas issued by terrorist organizations against the status of women in conflict areas.

Finally, the reports of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence must respect their mandates established by the relevant Security Council resolutions in order to achieve the stated goals. Egypt reaffirms the importance of deepening the understanding of States of the phenomenon of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism in order to officially recognize that the victims of sexual violence are indeed victims and the need for an anti-terrorism strategy and to provide the necessary reparations to those victims.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Uruguay for its initiative to convene today's open debate and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Cancela for presiding over the meeting.

China thanks Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed and Under-Secretary-General Dieng for their briefings. China also listened carefully to the statement made by the representative of civil society.

In recent years, with the common effort of the international community, the Security Council has made positive progress in implementing its relevant resolutions on women and peace and security. On the other hand, the international security situation remains grim and terrorist activities are rampant. Women and children in conflict continue to be threatened with sexual violence. The international community should pay heightened attention to the issue of sexual violence in conflict, adopt effective measures and comprehensively enhance the protection of vulnerable groups, such as women in conflict.

We must first prevent and defuse armed conflicts through peaceful means and eliminate sexual violence in conflict at its roots. The international community should stick to the general direction of finding political solutions to hotspots and resolve conflict peacefully through negotiations, good offices and mediation. In all phases of the peace process, efforts are to be made to ensure women's full right of participation and

decision-making. Attention is also to be given to using women's unique advantages in effectively addressing their security concerns and making them a major force in concluding peace.

Secondly, we must enhance the capacity of countries concerned to combat sexual violence in conflict. The countries concerned bear the primary responsibility for preventing and combatting sexual violence in conflict and protecting their women and children. The international community should respect the sovereignty and will of the countries concerned, respect the measures they adopt in the light of their own situations, actively provide constructive assistance to the countries concerned, enhance their capacity-building in the areas of security, economy and governance, and facilitate the implementation of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on women and peace and security.

Thirdly, we must increase efforts to combat terrorism and cross-border organized crime. The international community should pay close attention to the new phenomenon of sexual violence perpetrated by terrorist organizations, maintain unified standards, and strengthen cooperation to effectively fight international terrorism, especially terrorist activities, their financing, trafficking in persons and the spread of extremist ideologies with the aim of committing sexual crimes through the use of the Internet and social media. The relevant countries should strengthen border control and law enforcement cooperation, share counter-terrorism information and resources, and shut down the channels used by terrorists to travel.

Fourthly, we must ensure the synergy of United Nations institutions. The Security Council should assume its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and strengthen coordination with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, UN-Women and other relevant agencies to coordinate the handling of issues related to the women and peace and security agenda.

United Nations peacekeeping operations should maintain the policy of zero tolorance for sexual crimes committed by peacekeepers. The troop- and police-contributing countries should continue to strengthen the relevant training of their peacekeepers so as to raise their awareness of issues related to the protection of women and children and increase women's participation in peacekeeping operations.

China shall continue to work with the international community to jointly create a peaceful, secure and stable international environment, contribute to eliminating sexual violence in conflict at an early date, and continuously advance the cause of women around the world.

Mr. Barro (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude for the very informative briefings by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Mr. Adama Dieng, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. I would also especially like to thank Ms. Mina Jaf for her touching briefing, by which we have gained knowledge of the situation on the ground. I would also like to thank the delegation of Uruguay for organizing this open debate, as well as for its concept note (S/2017/402, annex) on such an important issue as sexual violence in armed conflicts.

As Ms. Zainab Bangura stated here in the Council,

> "[s]exual violence destroys the individual human person, undermines the prospects for peace and development and casts a shadow over our collective humanity".

Allow me to pay well-deserved tribute to Ms. Bangura for the valuable support she has always provided to victims of sexual violence in the performance of her duties as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict over the past five years. We wish her successor, Ms. Pramila Patten, every success in her new role and assure her of our full support in eradicating this crime, which sees women only as war booty or a means of altering the ethnic nature of peoples.

Given the psychological impact that sexual violence has on the victims as well as its harmful consequences on security, we believe that success in the fight against sexual violence necessarily requires that we prevent conflicts in the first place. It also means protecting civilians, extending assistance to the many survivors of this phenomenon and, finally, the necessary accountability.

For decades, even centuries, victims of sexual violence in conflict have often been deprived of the mere right to justice, and societies have been slow to

criminalize such acts or to provide victims with the necessary psychological and/or medical care. Today, however, we are pleased to note that the Security Council has taken on this issue head-on, including over the past decade by adopting standards aimed specifically at enforcing international human rights law with regard to women's rights. Nevertheless, as the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/249) highlights, our collective conscious is ever-more alarmed by disturbing phenomena such as the increase in violent extremism and terrorism, mass migration, trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and making women part of the economy in situations of armed conflict. Taking into account those new scourges, I would like to focus my statement today on three points that seem to me to be very relevant in our common struggle against the consequences of this crime.

First, with regard to preventing crimes of sexual violence, we all agree that preventing sexual violence is an integral part of conflict prevention in the broader sense. It is not simply a priority, it is the priority, as clearly stated by the Secretary-General General in his very first speech in this Chamber. Preventing sexual violence must begin with implementing the relevant legal provisions set out in international legal instruments and by including prevention mechanisms for this crime in peace agreements and ceasefire arrangements. There is also a need to strengthen the capacity of national institutions to ensure the prevention of sexual violence, including through training, awareness-raising and appropriate legal measures. In the context of prevention, it is also essential that we work with women's groups and with traditional and religious leaders, who can play an important role in putting in place strategic communications. However, we must bear in mind that suppression is equally essential to prevention, in that it discourages potential aggressors from actually carrying out such acts, helps to restore confidence in the rule of law and shows that no political or military leader and no man, woman or child is above the law.

The second point I would like to highlight is the need to improve protection for civilians and support for victims of sexual violence. In that connection, I welcome the increasing number of protection-of-civilians mandates included in United Nations missions. From the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone in 1999 to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in 2013 — to mention only that period — United Nations peacekeepers have committed themselves, even at the cost of their lives, to an undertaking that is as perilous as it is necessary. I would like here to pay a resounding tribute to them for their service to humankind as a whole. We must safeguard their considerable achievements by making sure that the actions carried out by a small number do not tarnish the reputation of generations of courageous and principled men and women. In that connection, my delegation welcomes and fully supports zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary-General to combat this phenomenon in the ranks of Blue Helmets. In the same spirit, we must appropriately address incidents committed by non-State actors, who are often responsible for such crimes in situations where there are wide-scale attacks of sexual violence. They, too, must not escape the full extent of the law.

Above and beyond the security afforded by peacekeeping operations, women victims also need assistance — in particular psychological assistance. In that regard, we agree that cases of sexual violence must first and foremost be treated with the strictest confidence, given that fear of reprisal or further violence can impede victims from coming forward. Moreover, given that sexual violence also constitutes a medical emergency, it is essential that victims have swift and unimpeded access to quality health services. In addition to those psychological and medical considerations, however, human and financial resources commensurate with the scope of the task at hand will be needed to undertake a coherent response aimed at bolstering quick-response measures in the face of a crime that has long been the subject of silence. It is also necessary to put in place a strategic framework aimed at prioritizing the rights and dignity of victims, end impunity and ensure that monitoring, control and prevention measures are in place against sexual exploitation and abuse. Nevertheless, greater efforts are needed at all levels to make sure that survivors have access to the full range of subsistence, medical and legal services without discrimination.

Thirdly, and lastly, I would like to address the need to hold the perpetrators of these acts accountable and to make sure that victims have access to justice. The first concern to take into consideration in that regard is to ensure that peace agreements and ceasefire arrangements explicitly reflect the concerns associated with sexual violence. That is crucial if we want to make sure that survivors have access to the necessary services and reparations in post-conflict situations, as

well to remove the perpetrators of this violence from their positions and ensure that they are held accountable for their actions. As a subsequent step, we will have to work to further the fight against stigmatization and marginalization of survivors, the consequences of which are often fatal. Besides, such stigmatization serves only to worsen their marginalization while hindering their full acceptance and reintegration. Society, including traditional and religious leaders, must also help survivors. We must convey the unequivocal message that it is the perpetrators who should be shamed, not the victims.

I cannot conclude without stressing the importance of certain prerequisites in support of the whole process of combating sexual violence in a context of armed conflict and the restoration of lasting peace. The first is expanding the inclusion of women at every level of peace and mediation negotiations. Their experience as the main victims of such crimes is far too valuable to ignore. Their participation in peacekeeping missions, as well as in our countries' armed forces and police, should therefore be increased. Lastly, my delegation believes firmly that the effective and transparent investigation and documentation of reported cases of sexual violence in armed conflict would help to ensure victims' access to impartial justice, and we must persist in affirming our determination in that regard. For Senegal, all of that means that we will never defeat sexual violence until our will to combat it, the will of the members of the international community, overcomes the will of warlords to use it.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the Uruguayan presidency for taking the initiative to hold today's important open debate. We also welcome your presence here today, Mr. President, and that of the Minister of Defence of Sweden, and we are grateful for the briefings by the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Adama Dieng, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Mina Jaf, representing civil society.

Today we have heard devastating stories of the experiences of women and girls living in situations of armed conflict. They are victims of sexual violence, rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution and sterilization and other forms of sexual abuse. Sexual violence against women represents a denial of their most basic rights, which continue to be abused and violated despite the existence of a framework of international law that should protect them. It is sustained even more by a patriarchal system that takes away women's control of their own sexuality and reproductive rights. Sexual violence against women is a dreadful expression of a patriarchal system intensified by conflict situations and that, as has been said, tightens its grip when women and children are targeted physically or mentally, deprived of their dignity and used as shields in war or armed conflict, making it impossible to effectively consolidate international peace and security.

Given the nature of crimes such as these that have consequences for security, as well as the fear or shame that can prevent them from being reported or condemned, it is difficult to estimate the numbers of victims of sexual violence in conflict. However, in many cases the figures are alarming. For example, according to the Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations, between 100,000 and 150,000 women were raped during the Rwanda genocide. According to the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2017/249) on conflict-related sexual violence, such acts were reported in 19 countries. We also have data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, published in 2016, showing that more than 15 million refugees and 36 million internally displaced persons were recorded, and from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs showing that women and children make up 80 per cent of the displaced population of countries in conflict.

The current situation has certainly not improved. Given its complexity, we feel it is important to focus on five fundamental areas, the first of which is prevention, followed by the right to truth, the right to justice, the right to reparation and to the knowledge that such abuses will not be repeated. With regard to prevention, I would like to cite the Secretary-General's report, which states that

> "the prevention of sexual violence is an integral part of wider conflict prevention and ... is not merely a priority, but the priority." (*S/2017/249, para. 4*)

Where security is concerned, I would like to echo the words of Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who said in the 2014 annual report (S/2014/181) that in South Sudan women had to choose between feeding their families or being attacked by armed men when they were out harvesting in the fields.

Such cases arise in other conflict-affected areas as well, which is why we must work to strengthen existing mechanisms that can help provide women and girls with effective security, whatever their circumstances and wherever and whenever they occur. In that regard, the relationship between sexual violence and trafficking in persons and the reference to that in resolution 1325 (2000) are very important, demonstrating the link between them and also between terrorism and transnational organized crime. According to the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 79 per cent of the victims of human trafficking are women and children. Terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram, among others, use sexual violence not only as a weapon of war but also as a method for financing their activities. In that regard, we must combat the flows of illicit funds from sexual exploitation and forced prostitution.

With regard to the implementation of international standards, we urge all countries to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which is the most appropriate mechanism for combating crimes related to sexual violence, because it recognizes that they constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and, in some cases, acts of genocide. It is also important to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010). Their implementation would enable the Office of the Special Representative to have a reliable system for monitoring, analysing and providing information on sexual violence in conflict, tools that can help to facilitate dialogue between parties to conflicts in order to help them protect civilians and develop a comprehensive strategy for combating sexual violence.

Lastly, if we are to see sustainable and lasting peace prevail, the perpetrators of sexual violence must not go unpunished at any time or at any level. Such acts must not be considered an inevitable consequence of war. While we cannot necessarily stop people going to war, we must work to adhere to international law and to condemn unilateral action, interventionism and policies of regime change, which are some of the factors that provoke conflict and must be halted if we are to avoid the tragic consequences that can arise not just for women and girls but for the whole of humankind.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the briefers for their participation in today's meeting and for their contributions to the discussion. We note with appreciation the work of Ms. Zainab Bangura, who recently completed her term as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and her commitment to eradicating that evil. We would also like to wish the newly appointed Special Representative, Ms. Pramila Patten, every success.

We consider the problem of sexual violence in conflict to be an urgent one chiefly in situations where it is a major aspect of a conflict in the context of the protection of civilians. At the same time, we should avoid attempts to artificially link sexual violence with the maintenance of international peace and security and conflict prevention. In our view, there is no convincing evidence that sexual violence is an underlying cause of armed conflict. Rather, what we are talking about here is a repulsive consequence of it.

We have studied the 2016 report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, which includes interim conclusions of the work of the United Nations in that area. We support the conclusion about the importance of strengthening the national potential for preventing sexual violence in conflict and ensuring accountability for it. It is only through cooperation with the Governments of States that are in a situation of armed conflict and by ensuring that their sovereignty is respected that we can achieve real progress in the fight against sexual violence. No less important is a similar dialogue involving, for instance, religious and other traditional leaders, with regard to the issue of the stigmatization of victims of sexual violence, their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

We are of course concerned about the information concerning the ongoing sexual violence by members of terrorist groups, in particular in Syria and Iraq. We strongly condemn such criminal practices. We call upon States to more actively cooperate in destroying the shadow economy of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIL), which receives an income, inter alia, from human trafficking, sexual slavery and forced prostitution. None of those crimes should remain unpunished. Their effective documentation and investigation is something that lies primarily within the purview of the relevant authorities. As for the establishment, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, of a so-called investigative mechanism in Syria, which the report mentions, the position of our delegation on that matter is very well known.

This is not the first time that we have to dwell on the issue of the terminology used — and that is not merely a point of academic interest. The issue is that a change of concepts could have significant practical consequences. Our delegation has repeatedly drawn attention to attempts to broaden the scope of the work of the Security Council in the area of combating sexual violence in conflict, including in connection with the use of the term "conflict-related sexual violence" in the most recent report. In our opinion, such seemingly technical changes are in fact fraught with the possibility of infringing upon the mandates of the Security Council and interfering in the terms of reference of other United Nations bodies or States. We need to very clearly distinguish sexual violence as a war crime from sexual violence as a criminal act not having anything to do with the parties to a conflict. We think that the Security Council should be dealing with the issue of sexual violence when it is directly related to an armed conflict in a situation that is on the agenda of the Security Council.

In both the concept note (S/2017/402, annex) for today's meeting and in the report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General, the issue of sexual violence has very rightly been underscored because of the atrocities being perpetrated by ISIL, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and the Al-Nusra Front. However, for some reason, mention is made of some "groups of extremists" or "violent extremist groups". We would like to underscore yet again that these and similar terrorists entities need to be called "terrorists"; otherwise, it can lead to lowering the level of gravity of the crimes and to double standards in the fight against terrorism, which is unacceptable. It is for the purpose of fighting acts of terrorism that we have iin place a framework of international instruments, including international conventions and Security Council resolutions. Let us not create any ambiguity here. We call upon everyone to take that into account when the next set of documents is prepared on this and other topics.

There is another trend that I want to mention and that has become increasingly obvious recently. Frequently, sexual violence is being considered as a violation of human rights, and that is of course true. However, in the context of an armed conflict, we need to be talking first and foremost about international humanitarian law, which requires not only Government bodies and agents but also the non-State participants in armed conflicts, to make sure that the norms and standards against sexual violence are being abided by and so that all participants bear responsibility for violations of those norms.

Such a softening of emphasis could weaken the existing framework in place for protecting civilians, as well as the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict. It could also lead to duplication of work within the United Nations. The preparation of reports on that issue is being undertaken by entities that do not have the requisite competence, nor enough knowledge, in the area of methodology or the substance of the issue. To cite an example, the recent report of United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine on sexual violence related to the conflict in Ukraine is guilty of unprofessionalism and mixing things up. And, as the delegation of the Ukraine yet again has voiced its unjustified complaints about Russia and referred to that report, let me say that it also contains much data on many cases of beatings and torture, including through electric shock, of threats of rape, disrobing and other crimes against men and women who have been deprived of liberty by Government forces. We can also provide other sources for similar information. We will refraim from providing Council members with quotes, as that would take up too much time.

Next month, for the third time, the international community will celebrate the International Day of Fighting Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict. It was established to demonstrate the resolve and unity of States to try to put an end to that criminal practice.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our readiness to cooperate in this area in the framework of the Council, on the basis of the resolutions adopted on the topic.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. Minister, for convening and presiding over this important open debate. Let me begin by welcoming both Mina Jaf and Adama Dieng back to the Council and to thank them for their very important briefings this morning. I would like to pay particular tribute to Ms. Jaf for sharing her powerful testimony with us and for bringing the unique and valuable perspective of civil society into the Security Council Chamber. It is a perspective that we need to hear more often. The Council works best when its members are informed by the women and men most affected by the issues that we

discuss in the Chamber. And sexual violence in conflict is no exception to that.

As we heard today, ending sexual violence is central to peacebuilding, conflict prevention and reconciliation. That is a message that should not need repeating in the Council. We have heard it many times before on our visits to South Sudan, the Lake Chad basi and, most recently, Colombia.

We can also not forget the stories that we heard in that dusty camp of internally displaced persons in northern Nigeria: stories of women whose daughters had been abducted by Boko Haram, most likely forced into marriage and sexual slavery. And yet, as the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/361) clearly shows, those messages are not getting through. Not enough is being done. Women and girls, men and boys, are still being subjected to sexual violence every day: in Mali, where survivors are forced to withdraw complaints so that the perpetrators can escape justice; in Syria, where not a single person has been prosecuted for Da'esh's vile acts; and in South Sudan, where we see the continuing abhorrent use of rape as a sickening means of punishing communities.

We know what needs to happen. We need to make ending sexual violence a key part of ceasefire deals. We need fewer women at kitchen tables and more women at negotiating tables. And we need even more women serving in uniform, because for too many survivors a man in uniform is someone to fear, not someone to trust. That is a lesson that needs to be heeded by Governments, by armed forces and, yes, by the United Nations and its peacekeepers too.

We cannot, however, be deterred. We must all play our part and do everything within our power to ensure that those crimes are reported, that survivors are cared for and that perpetrators, whether terrorists or State actors, are held to account. That is why the United Kingdom, in partnership with the United Nations Team of Experts and Justice Rapid Response, is carrying out a campaign to tackle the stigma that so often surrounds the survivors of sexual violence. It is why we worked with over 200 civil society experts to produce the international protocol that helps document those crimes. And it is why we are now developing the principles for global action to be launched at the General Assembly later this year. This is a new tool, developed, again, with civil society, but also with United Nations agencies and Member States, to help policymakers and international organizations tackle stigma through their own work.

Ultimately, if we want to address the appalling use of sexual violence by — and, indeed, by State actors — we need to look "bigger"; we need to look broader. We need to recognize that terrorists and State actors are enabled to carry out those sick acts when peace and security have broken down and when the Council has failed to uphold its duties enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. What happens in the Council, whether votes in favour or vetoes against, has a very real bearing on that insecurity. Let us then make sure that tackling sexual violence is not something that we talk about only once a year at this debate, but in every single Security Council item where it is relevant, starting with the upcoming Al-Qaida sanctions regime review.

Nor can we shy away from the fact that such appalling acts are the direct results of gender discrimination and inequality. Until women are treated equally, paid equally and respected equally, we will have failed, not just to address this issue but also to deliver the global goals that we all agreed less then two years ago.

I would like to conclude by paying tribute to former Special Representative Zainab Bangura for all her tireless efforts and exemplary leadership on this important issue. I wish her the best for the future, and I look forward to working with her successor, Pramila Patten.

Mr. Cardi (Italy) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Uruguay for convening today's important open debate on a topic that is inextricably linked to international peace and security.

(*spoke in English*)

I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Special Adviser Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their briefings.

Italy aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends on Women and Peace and Security.

In today's conflicts, civilians are increasingly caught in the crossfire. Conflict-related sexual violence is used to cause displacement, affect reproduction and ethnicity, deter opposition, offer troop incentives and undermine social and community cohesion. In recent years, concerns about the use of sexual violence have

increased in two specific instances. First, there is the widespread and systematic use of sexual violence by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Secondly, the increase in flows of people fleeing from conflict has increased migrants' risk of falling prey to human traffickers, including by being a victim of sexual abuse and exploitation.

As recognized in resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2331 (2016), conflict-resolution and counter-terrorism strategies must include measures to protect and empower women and girls. We need to better implement the instruments we already have to decisively prevent sexual violence, render accountable those responsible and provide assistance to victims.

Sexual and gender-based violence is not inevitable. Prevention begins in times of peace with a strong legal framework and solid institutions. It also begins by effectively using readily available tools, such as the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, which we have supported since its inception. It is aimed at identifying and preventing atrocity crimes by using early warning indicators, such as sexual violence.

Prevention will fail if there are no consequences to the crimes. Conflict-related sexual violence cannot be pardoned. The international community has taken increasing steps to put an end to impunity, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) is crucial to that effort. The Statute of the ICC expressly lists various forms of sexual and gender-based crimes as underlying acts of both crimes against humanity and war crimes. The establishment by the ICC Prosecutor of accountability for sexual violence as one of its key strategic goals and the historic verdict of the ICC in the case against Jean-Pierre Bemba are steps in the right direction. We must continue to empower international criminal legal bodies when national jurisdictions fail or are unable to deliver justice.

Similarly, we must strengthen accountability in cases of systematic gross violations by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh, including sexual and gender-based violence, sexual slavery, abduction and human trafficking, as in the case, for example, of the Yazidi population. We agree that the Security Council, in its relevant sanctions committees and subsidiary bodies, should expand designation criteria for the perpetrators of sexual violence in the context of armed conflict or terrorism. We successfully included such a clause in resolution 2339 (2017), on the Central African Republic, earlier this year.

Building national capacities is also central to strengthening training in order to address such crimes. That is what we are doing through the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units in Vicenza, which provides high-quality training and specialized courses for peacekeepers on the prevention and investigation of sexual and gender-based violence. This is a project we are carrying out with the United States of America.

Sexual violence has emerged as a constant of the new cycle based on conflict, trafficking in persons and migration. Migrants, especially women and girls, are highly vulnerable to trafficking for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. In our efforts to manage the unprecedented migration flows in the Mediterranean, Italy recently adopted a new law on protecting foreign unaccompanied minors that provides minors with specific assistance, including legal assistance, cultural mediation services and identification, and promotes family reunification.

Finally, as I said earlier, prevention and assistance to victims are not enough without accountability for perpetrators. It is only when sexual violence becomes visibly more costly that will there be a significant step forward towards the eradication of this scourge.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan thanks the Uruguayan presidency for convening today's important meeting. We also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Mohammed, the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dieng, and the representative of the non-governmental organizations, Ms. Jaf, for their briefings.

Today sexual violence in conflict must be fully addressed in all its dimensions, as it is linked, directly or indirectly, to the nature of conflict, the profile of the perpetrators and the nature of violence in its horrific forms. The escalation of sexual violence in conflict has reached alarming and unprecedented proportions. Sexual violence is aggravated by transnational crimes and human trafficking and has become a tactic of war, a core element of the ideology of terrorist groups and a source of their income.

This scourge therefore requires cross-national interventions. All efforts of UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, with UN-Women as the lead agency, require coordination with regional and

subregional structures. These must be coordinated with international organizations, especially the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as well as Interpol, and parliamentary religious leaders, non-governmental organizations and civil society. The object is not only to identify and monitor such abuse, but to take action against perpetrators, change extremist narratives, promote education at all levels, and create awareness around the empowerment of women.

The State has the primary responsibility of enhancing legislation to respond to sexual violence and other atrocity crimes, and of strengthening their law enforcement and criminal justice system. In addition, national legislative responses around the world should also be harmonized with United Nations standards to be made compatible for cross-regional action. In that regard, we commend the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in conflict for its continued technical assistance to Member States.

States should also be helped to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and other subsequent resolutions, including 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013), to counter violence at all levels and across all segments of society. We need to ensure accountability for all cases of sexual violence in conflict and bring an end to impunity. States need to work with Security Council sanctions committees, which should include sexual violence as a designated criterion for sanctions and the freezing of assets and finances of organized networks. Information sharing should take place not only across committees, but also across countries.

Kazakhstan calls on all to abide by the international principles of the rule of law and human rights and to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions. We also fully support the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on all forms of sexual exploitation and strongly believe that preventing sexual abuse by peacekeepers should be an absolute priority. All peacekeeping missions need to have protection as a fundamental element in their mandates, with a greater employment of women military and police officers with full training prior to deployment.

Kazakhstan is presently contributing by fielding its highly qualified military observers with gender competence to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, and we are working on expanding this deployment in the future.

Sexual violence affects every aspect of a survivor's life, child and adult. The victims of human trafficking and sexual violence should receive full, competent and speedy attention and support, with increased access to health care, social support, legal assistance and social economic reintegration. Kazakhstan shares the conviction in the dignity and empowerment of women with other Member States and will join the international community in every multilateral action to promote these essential elements for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new agenda for peace.

Mr. Minami (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting. I would also like to join the others in thanking the briefers for their very extensive and excellent briefings.

I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to Ms. Zainab Bangura for her passionate service as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict over the past five years, and I would like to welcome the appointment of Ms. Patten as the new Special Representative.

Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's new vision on prevention, which emphasizes equal rights and women's empowerment. We look forward to the new strategy of the Task Force on Gender Parity and Equality in the United Nations System.

We are seriously concerned that sexual violence continues to be perpetrated by terrorist groups as a tactic of war and terrorism. Such acts, entailing systematic abuses toward strategic objectives, may amount to crimes against humanity and, therefore, we in turn must address them systematically and strategically. Needless to say, the Security Council is the appropriate organ of the United Nations for discussions and actions on this issue, as it is directly linked to the maintenance of peace and security; it should absolutely not be viewed as an add-on element of the Council's work.

While we welcome improvements in the quality of information on sexual violence contained in the report of the Secretary General (S/2017/249), we still see a need for the Council to be timely briefed on sexual violence in conflict in the context of country-specific situations and relevant thematic areas of work. Ample and adequate information determines the quality of our collective actions.

We appreciate the firm will of the Secretary-General to make peacekeeping operations as gender

responsive as possible. In particular, Japan has been a strong supporter of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations system, as well as all efforts to realize this policy on the ground.

It is also encouraging to recognize the increased presence of women's protection advisers within United Nations peacekeeping missions. Their role to improve capacities for monitoring, analysing and reporting on sexual violence is of great importance; therefore, dedicated human and financial resources should be ensured to sustain their work. Japan has joined collective efforts in that regard by contributing financially to United Nations capacity-building training for these advisers.

Today, I would like to emphasize three points that Japan considers especially important.

First, we have to recognize that there are definite limitations to the method of dealing with issues of sexual violence at the national level only, as has been the case in the past. The importance of cross-border cooperation should be fully emphasized, as in resolution 2331 (2016), on human trafficking. International judicial cooperation should be promoted to effectively hold perpetrators accountable, and financial flows to terrorists must be cut off to thwart their objectives. Now is the time to step up our efforts to discuss and develop a new international framework of cooperation.

Secondly, acknowledging victims should be the priority of our considerations. Victims of sexual violence should be classified and treated as legitimate victims of violence, including terrorism, with the purpose of rendering them eligible for official support. This year, we decided to support a project for Syrian refugees and local communities in Jordan in the same context through United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. In addition, Japan has been an active partner of the International Criminal Court, contributing to the support projects of the Trust Fund for Victims for the victims of sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Uganda.

Thirdly, Japan is proud to be a leading supporter of the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and specifically the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, in their efforts to provide assistance to the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Somalia. I reiterate our ongoing support for the Team of Experts, and also encourage other Member States to join our efforts with the Team of Experts, which is only funded through voluntary contributions.

In conclusion, Japan has a growing concern, as the scope of this issue expands and grows more complex. We are witnessing new vulnerable victim groups, such as children born of rape, men and boys, and displaced populations. In that context, we would welcome more information sharing on these new groups by the Special Representative and the Team of Experts. Japan remains committed to combating all forms of sexual violence in conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order for the Council to be able to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Sanabria Valderrama (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like other speakers who have preceded me, I would like to thank the presidency of Uruguay for organizing today's debate, which is going to help to focus attention on one of the main and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, namely, sexual violence in conflict.

I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing and to express my gratitude for the statements made by Mr. Dieng and Ms. Jaf. They have set before us a very difficult reality that requires action and determination on our part. I would also like to take advantage of this opportunity to pay tribute, as others have done, to Ms. Zainab Bangura for her excellent work. We worked with her over a period of years with a view to strengthening the instruments needed to combat the scourge of sexual violence in conflict, and we welcome her successor, Ms. Pramila Patten. Under Ms. Patten's leadership and that of the Secretary-General, the next five years will provide us with a historic opportunity to make the fight against the worst forms of exploitation one of the priorities at the heart of all United Nations priorities.

Spain will decisively support all efforts aimed at preventing sexual violence and human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes. We want to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes are brought to justice and serve their sentences. We wish to contribute to the reintegration of the victims and to the elimination of any possible stigmatization. We all know that those goals are not in the exclusive hands of any one of us, but they are in the hands of all of us together. Acting together with perseverance and firmness we can make a difference, which is why it is important to ask ourselves today what a body such as the Security Council can do in the immediate future and what the rest of the United Nations membership can contribute.

Last December, Spain promoted the adoption of resolution 2331 (2016). Many elements of the resolution expanded the already extensive body of norms relating to combating sexual violence, and new pathways are opening up on which we can work in the immediate future, such as addressing the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war or terrorism, the impact of violence on men and boys, and the fight against stigmatization. In that context, I would like to highlight four points.

The key aspect that we need to improve in the implementation of resolutions on sexual violence in conflict is making good use of the specialized expertise of the panels of experts of the sanctions committees, national experts in combating violent extremism, mediators and negotiators in peace processes, officials working at border posts, and military and police personnel deployed in United Nations missions. Irrespective of whether we are referring to the national, regional or international level or whether we are referring to the humanitarian sphere, the security sector or the political and diplomatic arena, it is only when we are working in a consistent and coordinated manner in all of those areas that we will achieve better results. That specialized knowledge, enriched by an ongoing dialogue with civil society, will also contribute to the development and improved implementation of early-warning mechanisms, which could help prevent an outbreak of an armed conflict. Undoubtedly, that is the best investment we can make in favour of international peace and security. Spain has strengthened its extensive training of security-sector personnel, providing training to such countries as Palestine and Colombia, and contributes to the United Nations initiative against sexual violence in conflict.

The second pillar of any action should be guided by the fight against impunity. In that context, we have to look at all the mechanisms that can improve the preservation of evidence, so that responsibility can be decided in national legal bodies or at the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, the victims should be at the heart of any measure undertaken. We must do more in terms of support and socioeconomic reintegration for survivors and the children they bear as a consequence of sexual violence. We have to ensure that they get the recognition and reparations they deserve in whatever context they find themselves.

Fourthly, I would like to highlight that it is not just a question of forging peace by relying on training and expertise in the area of gender-based and sexual violence. Rather, it is essential that there should be the equal participation of women in the peace and security sectors, in the contingents deployed and at the negotiating table.

Just a week ago, in Alicante, we held the first meeting of the network of women-and-peace-and-security focal points, which we launched in New York in September. One of the subjects dealt with was the structural barriers to equality in the sphere of peace and security. Not one country has achieved satisfactory numbers. Spain is convinced that expanding the role of women is essential to combating sexual violence in conflict and sexual exploitation and abuse. For that reason, we support deepening the debate on specific measures needed to increase the participation of women in all areas. Much remains to be done. Debates like today's have to remind us of that fact and motivate us if we are to make progress.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Enikanolaiye (Nigeria): I thank the delegation of Uruguay for organizing today's open debate and welcome the participation of that country's Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. We also thank the Deputy Secretary-General and other briefers for sharing their perspectives on this very important subject.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his very comprehensive report (S/2017/249), including its far-reaching recommendations, which, if fully implemented, would ensure that we have truly begun to address the plight of women and girls in armed conflicts

in an effective manner. It is evident that women and girls caught in conflict suffer more than men and boys do, and that they are extremely vulnerable to violent extremism and remain, in many parts of the world, the victims of terrorism most affected by the scourge of sexual violence. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the abduction, trafficking and maltreatment of women and girls by extremist groups, including the heinous activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region and particularly in north-east Nigeria.

We cannot agree more with the Secretary-General on the patterns and trends identified in his latest report. Indeed, the use of women and girls as sex slaves must equally be condemned. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations aimed at improving inter-agency coordination, knowledge-building, advocacy and technical country-level support. My delegation believes that in order to achieve an enduring result in the search for workable solutions to the challenges of sexual violence in conflict, priority must be accorded to addressing the enabling environment and the underlying root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, hunger, human rights abuses, injustice, unemployment, corruption, the lack of inclusiveness, and impunity.

Perpetrators must be held accountable, but the capacity of States to do so, with the prevalence of weak structures and institutions, needs to be addressed. Beyond the law-enforcement approach, however, dealing with the political economy of conflicts in a more holistic manner is crucial to the finding of potential remedies to the situation of conflicts around the world. In that regard, multilateral cooperation should be enhanced so as to strengthen States' capabilities to deal with the threats posed by violent conflicts, criminality and terrorism.

Today's open debate bears great relevance with respect to the terrorist activities of Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria, which have led to the large displacement of approximately 2 million people and conflict-related violence against women and girls, which has been widely condemned by all. Nigeria has always acted in a concerted manner to ensure accountability for crimes of sexual violence. We have also collaborated with the United Nations and other international partners to improve service delivery and enhance protection measures both in communities and in areas where women and girls seek refuge. Those efforts by the Government of Nigeria should be seen in the context of the great strides already made by our military in severely degrading Boko Haram terrorism.

In spite of the daunting challenges, Nigeria has been in the vanguard of promoting the involvement of women in conflict resolution and in the promotion of peace and security. Only last week, the Nigerian Government launched its revised national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions on women and peace and security. The plan reflects our commitment to ensuring the security of women and girls during armed conflicts and enhancing their active and direct participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We have also taken measures to enhance the security of women and girls in internally-displaced-person camps, reduce their vulnerability and promote their safe return to their homes and their eventual reintegration into society.

As part of efforts to counter violent extremism, Nigeria is taking steps to deradicalize convicted terrorists by developing a range of psychological experts and hiring counsellors to pioneer rehabilitation efforts and using Islamic scholars to counter extremist narratives by training them on various aspects of dialogue and religious counselling. We are also working assiduously with the affected communities to design economic revitalization programmes targeted at people most affected by terrorism and violent extremism.

We take this opportunity to assure the Council that, following the recent release of 82 of the abducted Chibok schoolgirls, the Government has intensified its efforts to secure the release of the remaining abducted girls and to free the released girls from the ideological grips of Boko Haram terrorists. Having regained their freedom, it is equally important that the girls regain their self-esteem and be assisted in returning to their families and their schools. Furthermore, emergency teams of psychosocial counsellors and health professionals have been dispatched to the north-east of the country in order to assist the recently released girls with the profiling of victims, with a view to adopting appropriate therapies for them.

Nigeria has carefully and favourably considered joining the existing 108 countries that have signed on to the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups and the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups. Following Nigeria's active participation at this

year's international ministerial conference in Paris in February, it is our conviction that this step will help to strengthen Nigeria's commitment to global frameworks by further preventing the recruitment and use of girl children as child or female bombers by Boko Haram.

In addition, the Government of Nigeria has put taken steps for victims of Boko Haram terrorism — in the form of rape and other sexual violence against children, abduction of children and other grave violations — by putting in motion several legal remedies. Some legal and social remedies undertaken by the Government include the diligent prosecution of more than 200 detained Boko Haram terrorists in competent courts of law, as well as reintegration, reorientation and rehabilitation programmes designed to meet the needs of each victim of sexual violence.

We take note of and fully support the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249) under consideration. We are convinced that the United Nations remains the central platform for raising awareness for the plight of women and girls in conflicts, including the peace and security agenda of the United Nations. We also acknowledge the progress made so far by the various United Nations mechanisms in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Nigeria stands ready to continue to work with the United Nations and international partners in that important endeavour.

We commit to ensuring that women and girls enjoy their full rights and that those who have perpetrated sexual violence are dealt with in accordance with our national laws and international obligations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Ms. Chuard (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I take the floor on behalf of Switzerland for two reasons — first, because sexual violence primarily, though not exclusively, affects women and girls; and, secondly because, through its Permanent Representative and within the framework of the Gender Champions initiative, Switzerland has committed to increase the participation of women in the deliberations of United Nations organs, including the Security Council.

Switzerland would like to thank the Uruguayan presidency for organizing this timely debate and welcomes the latest report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence and its recommendations. We also thank participants for their briefings.

To start with, I would like to underline the importance of the resolution 2331 (2016), adopted last December. This first Security Council resolution on human trafficking condemns this crime and human rights violation in the strongest terms, and explicitly recognizes trafficking in persons as a matter of peace and security.

Today we are discussing a closely interrelated topic, namely, sexual violence in armed conflict. In that connection, I would mention three considerations.

First of all, although sexual violence affects a cross section of the population, certain factors contribute to greater vulnerability. Forced displacement and migration increase the risk of abuse and exploitation. Reports from refugees and migrants arriving in Europe suggest that many women and girls have been sexually exploited upon their flight from conflict situations. At last year's open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (see S/PV.7704) we referred to the need to protect women and girls when they are forcibly displaced or travelling along migration routes. Sadly, that concern persists. Sexual violence in all its forms is also a driver of displacement and a risk factor for people on migration routes and being displaced. The same holds true for boys and men.

Over the next two years, United Nations States Members will negotiate a new framework for global migration governance. The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration offers an opportunity to include some of the issues of this debate in the discourse on global migration. The thematic debate on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and to be held in Vienna in September 2017 is one of many platforms for addressing those issues.

Secondly, we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to continue including sexual violence as a designation criteria for sanction regimes, in keeping with resolution 1820 (2008). Moreover, we need to take all the necessary measures to prevent organized crime and to block the financing of terrorist groups through human trafficking, forced prostitution and other forms of sexual violence. Those measures logically follow the acknowledgement that sexual violence and human trafficking are elements of the economy of war.

Thirdly, we are pleased that the Secretary General's report makes an important reference to sexual and reproductive health. We have addressed that topic in previous debates, but the issue is no less pressing today. It is our duty to ensure that women and girls affected by conflict have access to a wide range of quality sexual and reproductive health services, including services to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

In that context, among other things, Switzerland currently supports a psychosocial care programme in the Great Lakes region. Its objective is to address sexual and gender-based violence in a comprehensive manner at the individual, local and institutional levels. The programme includes medical, psychological and legal services, and also helps to reintegrate victims into their communities. Between 2011 and 2016, almost 60,000 women enjoyed comprehensive care and support through the programme.

Finally, Switzerland thanks Ms. Zainab Bangura for her devoted service as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and pledges its full support to Ms. Pramila Patten, her successor to that post.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mrs. Rugwabiza (Rwanda): I thank you very much, Mr. President, and your delegation for organizing this important open debate. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Mr. Adama Dieng for their briefings. We hope that today's debate will contribute to enhancing collective action against this war crime, given the alarmingly growing number of conflicts where sexual violence is used as a weapon of war and terrorism against civilian populations.

Sexual and gender-based violence is not inevitable. Preventing and protecting against mass atrocities, including sexual violence, is a fundamental State responsibility. As Member States, it is indeed our responsibility to put in place the necessary normative and legal framework, as well as enforcement measures, to ensure zero tolerance for sexual violence in both times of peace and war. However, as we all know, the first rule to be broken during times of conflict is the rule of law. It is therefore our collective responsibility to ensure the protection of those targeted by sexual violence and most in need of protection during conflicts.

As situations of conflict continue to worsen in many places and women and children continue to be the main target of sexual violence, we believe that all United Nations peacekeeping missions should have a robust mandate to protect civilians. The Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, to which many members in the Chamber are signatory, are an effective guide to that end. Protecting those in need should be given priority by ensuring that we take all measures to provide more effective protection to the civilian populations, that we facilitate humanitarian assistance and that we allow investigation in cases of violation and abuse. Rwanda is happy to meet the minimum target of 15 per cent of all deployed peacekeeping contingents being female. We mention that specifically because we think that increasing the numbers of women in peacekeeping will go a long way in helping us to ensure the fight against violence.

Rwanda believes that Member States should systematically train all peacekeepers to address gender issues, prevent sexual violence and protect individuals, including women and girls. Rwanda has operationalized a curriculum for all of our troops and police in predeployment training that includes lessons on sexual exploitation and abuse. In the same vein, we call upon all Member States to boost women's participation in all contingents and units. More specifically, we call upon Member States to include gender advisers and female officers and an increased presence for female peacekeeping personnel in general.

Sexual violence in conflict is a crime that we can eradicate. We strongly believe that our joint efforts can yield tangible results through a combination of preventive and responsive measures, including targeted sanctions against all categories of perpetrators, monitoring and systematic reporting, assistance for victims, the empowerment of women and girls, increased numbers of female peacekeepers and advisers and training for all forces. That will go a long way in contributing to creating an environment of zero tolerance for sexual violence as a weapon of war.

We will continue to extend our support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in implementing her mandate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Tenya Hasegawa (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset I would like to thank the Uruguayan

presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate on sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism, thereby highlighting one of the greatest atrocities committed against human beings in the context of conflict.

Sexual violence used as a tactic of war as part of a widespread or systematic attack on civilian populations is capable of exacerbating and significantly prolonging armed conflict. We can see that terrorist groups commit acts of sexual and gender-based violence as part of their strategic objectives, thereby dealing a harsh blow to entire communities and directly affecting the human rights of women and girls, as well as their health, education and participation in public life. That is why Peru believes that conflict-resolution strategies and the fight against terrorism must necessarily include efforts to protect and empower women and girls and to combat conflict-related sexual violence.

Despite the efforts of the international community, many documented cases of sexual violence in conflict still exist. In that context, the Organization's work on the ground has been critical in collecting information and facilitating dialogue to obtain protection commitments from parties in conflict.

We cannot ignore cultural stigma and victims' fear of suffering reprisals or intimidation by their abusers, including against their families or witnesses, which cause most of them not to report the violence. That goes hand in hand with the lack of trust and credibility in national institutions, particularly when sexual violence is perpetrated by the very forces responsible for providing necessary protection.

With regard to the relevant measures undertaken by Peru on the issue, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations established a registry of displaced persons, which led to the adoption of measures to protect the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. Similarly, a law adopted in 2005 established a comprehensive reparations programme for victims of the violence that occurred between 1980 and 2000, including those who suffered human rights violations such as rape. Furthermore, among measures to prevent violence against women, Peru adopted a law on equal opportunity between men and women, the national programme on gender equality and the national programme against violence against women, which includes the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict.

Peru welcomes the trend of systematically incorporating the gender perspective in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the inclusion of women as participants in conflict prevention and resolution. That is why Peru has been increasing female personnel in each of the six peacekeeping missions in which it participates, currently representing about 15 per cent of the personnel on the ground.

Peru considers the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women to be fundamental in addressing the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence by transforming harmful sociocultural norms and combating violent extremism. In that sense, our country has been working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 5, aimed at achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Similarly, Peru supports the inclusion of a gender perspective in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Based on that awareness, the uniformed personnel provided by Peru to peacekeeping operations receive specialized predeployment training on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Peru is committed to working with other States in tackling the related outstanding issues in order to achieve a peaceful environment in which all women, without exception, can enjoy their lives to the fullest, free of mistreatment. That is why it is essential to deal comprehensively with sexual violence related to conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Nescher-Stuetzel (Liechtenstein): We thank Uruguay for providing us with the opportunity to speak on this important issue. And we are grateful to Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, Under Secretary-General Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their very important and substantial briefings. We would also like to thank Ms. Bangura for her excellent work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict over the past five years. We look forward to working with the new Special Representative, Ms. Patten.

The most recent report (S/2017/249) by the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence gives little hope that the use of sexual violence as a

tactic of war is on the decline. Moreover, it emphasizes that in most cases the suffering of the survivors does not stop with the violation itself; stigma and shame exacerbate their situation further, often leading to reluctance to report such violations, thereby letting perpetrators go unpunished.

Accountability is a key ingredient in our joint efforts to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence. International criminal justice mechanisms have significantly advanced the efforts to fight impunity — as illustrated, for example, by the 1998 Akayesu judgment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which found that sexual assault constituted an act of genocide; or the 2016 Bemba judgment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), where the principle of command responsibility was invoked to find Bemba criminally responsible for rape committed by his subordinates. Those judgments send the clear message that impunity for sexual violence as a tool of war is not an option. We commend the Prosecutor of the ICC for prioritizing sexual and gender-based crimes in many of her ongoing investigations.

We have to look for other options where the ICC has no jurisdiction. In the case of Syria, the accountability mechanism established by the General Assembly currently offers the only promising path towards accountability and justice for the Syrian people. Its terms of reference note the need for dedicated expertise on sexual violence. We call on all States to continue their political and financial support for the mechanism.

Women and girls are more likely to become victims of sexual violence in conflict situations, but men and boys are also affected. Estimates suggest that one in three survivors is male. The response to the issue has been insufficient; psychosocial and medical services offered to male survivors are limited and transitional justice mechanisms often adopt a gender-binary interpretation of sexual violence, identifying women as victims and men as perpetrators. This denies men and boys access to reparations and health services. We commend Spain for adopting gender-inclusive language in resolution 2331 (2016) on human trafficking in conflict and encourage others to follow suit.

Resolution 2331 (2016) is of particular importance to Liechtenstein. It identifies a correlation between human trafficking, sexual violence, armed conflict, terrorism and transnational organized crime. It also reflects some of the ideas resulting from a joint workshop we held with the United Kingdom and the United Nations University (UNU) on denouncing and disrupting trafficking and modern slavery and protecting its victims. Liechtenstein organized another workshop with UNU in March of this year, with a focus on disrupting financial flows associated with trafficking and modern slavery, which brought together leaders from the financial sector, as well as Member States and civil society. The product of the workshop is scheduled to be presented during the high-level political forum in July 2017 and the high-level week this fall.

Finally, let me underline that the most efficient method for ending conflict-related sexual violence is ensuring that it does not happen in the first place. Liechtenstein commends Secretary-General Guterres for his focus on prevention and would like to recall that more than half of the current membership has signed the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, pledging to support timely and decisive action to prevent or end the commission of atrocity crimes. We call on the remaining Member States to join our efforts in ensuring the Security Council delivers on its mandate as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations and assumes the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by thanking the Uruguayan presidency for convening this open debate. I would like also to express my gratitude to the briefers for their valuable inputs in this debate.

Women are a key resource for promoting peace and stability. Resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security focuses on the specific impact of armed conflict on women and the positive role they can play in conflict prevention and strengthening peace, stability and security at local, regional and international levels.

Unfortunately, the current crisis, especially in the Middle East, has taken abhorrent forms and constitutes unprecedented challenges to the stability in our region. Women are among the main victims grappling with the scourge of violent extremism and terrorism. The spread of violent extremism, inspired by takfiri ideology, which has no respect for women, threatens the life and rights of women and girls. They have suffered

the most and have been targeted for systematic sexual exploitation and slavery, rape and other forms of sexual violence by extremists and terrorist groups.

Iran strongly condemns the barbaric acts of the terrorist and violent extremist groups, such as Da'esh and its offshoot, Boko Haram, as well as indiscriminate attacks against civilians, including women and children. In an environment filled with hate, intimidation, xenophobic attitudes, racial profiling and discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, country of origin and language, women easily fall victim to sexual violence and abuse. Therefore, their opportunities for academic, economic, political and social progress are gravely curtailed by these intimidating mind sets and situations.

In some regions, particularly the Middle East, destructive factors such as foreign intervention, military invasion, as well as foreign occupation, have contributed considerably to the collapse of families. As a result, women and children are bearing the brunt of menaces that not only destroy their present, but expose them to long-lasting miseries that will remain for generations. Under such circumstances, there will be little room for women's empowerment and development.

The impact of sanctions on gender-responsive policies and budgeting within respective countries is another significant aspect. Sanctions, as a form of collective punishment, flagrantly and indiscriminately violate the basic human rights of all citizens, particularly women. The systematic violations of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian women, under brutal occupation by the Israeli regime and the illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip constitute massive deprivation of Palestinian civilians and women of their rights.

It is unfortunate that women and girls make up a disproportionate number of the victims of air strikes in Yemen. As confirmed reports indicate, the unjustified invasion of Yemen by a Saudi-led coalition has led to the death of more than 10,000 people and the injury of more than 17,000 civilians, including at least 1,677 women and 2,260 children.

In closing, let me stress that my delegation believes that organizing such a debate in the Council should not undermine the work of the most relevant bodies for consideration of women-related issues in the United Nations system, namely, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council, as well as the General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Marinaki: I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

A little less than a year ago, we all commemorated the first International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. On that occasion, the European Union reaffirmed its strongest support for zero tolerance to any form of sexual violence. We said it then and we say it now — sexual violence is a flagrant and unacceptable violation of human rights, and we stand in solidarity with its victims and survivors, as well as with their families.

Today, I would like to extend my special thanks to Uruguay for organizing this open debate, and to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed; Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng; and Ms. Amina Jaf, who spoke on behalf of civil society, for their statements. Let me also take this opportunity to also congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and to wish her every success in her new challenges. We also would like to thank the outgoing Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her commitment and determined service over the past five years and wish her the best in her future endeavours.

The European Union applauds the measures taken by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire that led to the delisting of the Forces armées de Côte d'Ivoire from the annex of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249). We welcome the report submitted by the Secretary-General. The European Union emphasizes the continued importance of a holistic approach that addresses sexual violence in conflict as part of the broader women and peace and security agenda, recognizing that sexual and gender-based violence are also the results of gender inequalities and of women's subordinated position in too many parts of the world. In addition, the issue of stigma should be analysed and addressed within the broader context of sexual and gender-based violence that may or may not be related to conflict.

While sexual and gender-based violence predominantly targets women and girls, men and boys are also among the primary and secondary victims of these crimes. We fully support the Secretary-General's focus on conflict prevention. Efforts to prevent sexual and gender-based violence fall in line with the key objective of the European Union's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy — addressing conflicts at an early stage while building resilience as a key priority for States and societies. The European Union also remains determined to lead by example in preventing sexual and gender-based violence and protecting individuals and communities from it.

We know that accountability starts at home, and in that spirit we have launched a series of actions in 2017 to combat violence against women and girls in all its forms in the European Union and worldwide. We are also pleased to inform the Council that last Friday, the Council of Ministers of the European Union decided to accede as a full party to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women.

We welcome the focus of the Security Council on the issue of trafficking in human beings in armed conflict, and we have built an ambitious, gender-specific and comprehensive legal and policy framework for combating it. Anti-trafficking action is also a key part of our external policies. Since 2015, our naval operations in the Mediterranean have saved more than 240,000 lives.

The European Union strongly supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and his leadership in dealing with that challenge. We are working to ensure that the highest standards of professionalism and conduct in both civilian and military operations are upheld, and to lay the ground for stronger preventive, protective and accountability measures. We have also funded the International Organization for Migration to enable it to develop tools that will help the humanitarian community prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian staff, and we hope they will also be useful for reform of the wider United Nations system on this issue, which we very much welcome.

We have been firmly advocating for and promoting women's equitable and meaningful participation in conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding, and we aim to improve the representation and participation of women throughout our civilian and military deployments. We want to see practical steps taken to tackle impunity for the use of rape by State and non-State actors as a weapon of war and to continue to change global attitudes to such crimes. Accountability and access to justice are a must, and victims, survivors and witnesses of sexual violence have to be ensured access to impartial and gender-sensitive tribunals and to reparations, including as a form of transitional gender justice.

We have adopted a framework for transitional justice for ensuring that gender is a variable that those processes take into account. Efforts to fight sexual violence in conflict should also include measures to ensure adequate information, fact-finding, analysis and data collection through proper documentation, as well as the rapid and effective investigation of such crimes. We acknowledge the key role of civil-society organizations in this area, and we will continue to work with them in that shared endeavour.

We underline the importance of making full use of the mechanisms and tools created by the Security Council to combat and prevent conflict-related sexual violence, and we welcome and encourage further use of the human rights and sexual violence-related criteria in the Council's sanctions regimes. To date, 18 of the 28 European Union (EU) member States have adopted national action plans in compliance with resolution 1325 (2000). We continue to follow up systematically on the 2014 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict with a comprehensive, multisectoral and multidimensional approach. We have worked to ensure that all our humanitarian assistance systematically tailors its responses to the different and gender-specific needs of women and men of all ages.

I would like to flag a few concrete EU initiatives around the world for preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. The Madad Fund, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, launched the EU's biggest-ever response package to the Syrian refugee crisis. Among other components, the programme strengthens access to protection from sexual and gender-based violence to at least 700,000 Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons in neighbouring countries.

In Somalia, we have been funding the International Rescue Committee's provision of integrated, lifesaving health services to victims of gender-based violence in

eight health clinics and one hospital. Furthermore, High Representative Federica Mogherini, who represented the European Union at the Somalia conference held on 11 May in London, has announced an additional €200 million aimed at strengthening our leading role in supporting the country's development, stability and security, and together with the EU member States we have already allocated more than €460 million in humanitarian development assistance. In that regard, combating gender-based violence is an important part of our humanitarian effort.

For a decade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the European Union has been funding the Panzi hospital, which specializes in treating women who are victims of wartime gang rapes. In 2014 its founder, Dr. Denis Mukwege, was awarded the European Union's Sakharov Prize for saving the lives of thousands of women. We have also allocated €3.5 million to a project implemented by UN-Women to ensure that transitional justice processes in Kosovo, Colombia and the Philippines are tackling gender-based abuses against women. All in all, more than 84 different projects in countries around the world have reached almost 3.5 million beneficiaries.

In conclusion, in order to accelerate implementation of our commitments, in 2017 we will give priority to specific support to women refugees and victims of violence in the most remote and fragile areas. We are also strengthening efforts to ensure that women and girls arriving in the European Union after fleeing conflict, persecution, instability or poverty have access to medical care, legal support, appropriate trauma counselling and psychosocial care if they are victims of discrimination or any kind of sexual violence. While much has been achieved, we must also acknowledge that much work remains to be done. The European Union will continue to stand by the efforts of the United Nations to combat these violations together, because all women, men, girls and boys all over the world deserve to be able to lead a life free from fear and full of hope.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): My delegation welcomes today's open debate. Sexual violence is among the most egregious crimes in armed conflict and disproportionately affects women and girls. For far too long, sexual violence has been seen as an unfortunate and inevitable reality of conflict. For much too long, humankind has stood on the sidelines, seeking justification for its collective inaction in an evasive sense of fatalism. But as conflict situations across the world have so tellingly shown, the exploitation of women and girls is not an incidental byproduct of conflict but an instrument widely employed to humiliate and terrorize civilians. For its survivors, the scars of sexual abuse are often indelible and enduring, extending well beyond the limits of their physical and physiological suffering. Social stigma and marginalization further complicate any attempts to seek closure.

Within the ambit of its agenda on women and peace and security, the Security Council has led global efforts to end this dehumanizing practice. Its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) both ushered in and institutionalized a new focus on gender in conflict, moving women's participation and rights to the forefront of the political debate. Subsequent Council resolutions have built on this momentum by recognizing sexual violence as a tactic of war and a threat to international peace and security, and developing measures to respond to and prevent such occurrences.

The progress achieved thus far, however, has been both uneven and varied. As the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) shows, women and girls continue to serve as a form of currency in the political economy of war. The world has watched in horror as several State and non-State actors have employed rape and sexual abuse as a deliberate policy to subdue and suppress entire populations. We see this in Pakistan's neighbourhood as well. Unfortunately, those who commit and condone sexual violence are often not fully held to account.

The critical challenge for the international community now is to convert political will into practical action and drive real change on the ground. The effectiveness of our collective action will depend on an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive approach. The top priority should be to combat impunity for these crimes. We must redirect the stigma and the consequences of sexual violence from the survivors to the perpetrators of such acts. As prosecution is critical to prevention, emphasis should in particular be placed on strengthening and enhancing the capacity of national institutions and criminal justice systems in countries facing armed conflict.

Secondly, attention must also be placed on providing support to the victims of sexual violence.

Justice means not only punishment for the perpetrators but also redress for the survivors. Survivors need not only financial compensation but also access to health care, social services and legal support. They must also be given assistance to reintegrate into society.

Thirdly, the plight of migrant women and girls requires special attention. We must ensure that in their quest for protection and safety, these victims of conflict do not fall prey to human trafficking and abuse. We therefore support the Secretary-General's recommendation that conflict-related sexual violence be considered grounds for asylum.

Fourthly, the gender perspective should be fully integrated into the peacebuilding paradigm to reinforce the protection environment. This would entail not only the greater participation of women in peacekeeping mandates, but also an enhanced role for women in peace accords, stabilization and the reconstruction phases of post-conflict rehabilitation.

Finally, the best way to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence is to prevent and resolve conflicts in the first place. We believe that the Secretary-General's emphasis on conflict prevention as the core of the global peace and security paradigm neatly dovetails with that approach.

Multidimensional peacekeeping missions with protection mandates play a key role in combating violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations. As a leading troop-contributing country, Pakistan remains committed to this cause. For my country, the protection of the vulnerable, including women and children, is not only a global peace and security concern but an obligation of humanity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Duarte (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I commend Uruguay for convening this open debate on such an important issue.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to thank Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her remarks, as well as Special Representative Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their briefings.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and terrorism is abhorrent and utterly unacceptable. These crimes destroy the social fabric of communities and inflict long-lasting psychological trauma. Brazil has repeatedly condemned all forms of violence against all women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. It was during Brazil's chairmanship of the Committee pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 2011, that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, then Ms. Margot Wallström of Sweden, was invited to brief the Committee on sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This eventually led the Security Council to impose sanctions, for the first time, for acts of sexual violence in conflict, in collaboration with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, placing the issue permanently on the agenda.

Notwithstanding some progress that has been made as a result of our collective engagement, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) still paints a grim picture. Victims face lethal retaliation, honour crimes, suicide, untreated diseases, unsafe abortion, economic exclusion and indigence. Of particular concern are children born of rape, who may themselves face a lifetime of marginalization. Survivors of sexual violence in war zones must be recognized as legitimate victims of conflict and terrorism.

We support the Secretary-General's call on traditional, religious and community leaders to address harmful social norms and contribute to redirecting the stigma of rape from victims to perpetrators, who must be held accountable for their crimes. Accountability is a powerful deterrent, as well as a moral duty to those afflicted. The lack of adequate national capacity and expertise to investigate and prosecute for acts of sexual violence remains one of the main impediments to ensuring accountability not only for sexual violence but also for related crimes. This situation often leads to widespread impunity and has had an impact on access to justice and on the safety of survivors. The international community should encourage and help States to fully exercise their responsibility. Promoting the universality of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is also crucial to ending impunity.

Given the atrocity of these crimes, we must do everything in our hands to prevent them. Among other measures, we must help strengthen national capacities, curb the availability of weapons, ensure prosecution, protect victims, take adequate action to change how they are perceived in their communities, and protect witnesses.

Sexual violence is not sufficiently viewed as a threat to peace and in its relation to broader issues of insecurity. Peace agreements rarely make reference to the need to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. They seldom include provisions linked to accountability for gender-based violence. Post-conflict arrangements hardly ever deal with the situation of women who have been subjected to violence during conflict and its aftermath. More has to be done to ensure that women have a voice and are active participants in peace agreements and in the negotiation, design and implementation of post-conflict and peacebuilding arrangements.

In highlighting once more the importance that Brazil attaches to the women and peace and security agenda of the Security Council, let me conclude by mentioning the release, last March, of Brazil's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which is the result of a joint effort by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Justice and Citizenship, as well as UN-Women and civil society. Policies to protect women and girls from the consequences of war and to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual violence in conflict, are among the key components of our National Action Plan, along with measures to engage women, including in leadership positions, in peace and security initiatives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Grant (Canada): I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security, an informal network of 53 Member States chaired by Canada, representing all five regional groups of the United Nations.

We thank Uruguay for organizing today's open debate. We would also like to thank Ms. Zainab Bangura for her exemplary service as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict over the past five years. Furthermore, we welcome Ms. Pramila Patten in her appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, where she can count on our full support in carrying out her mandate.

We are outraged by the persistent and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflict by State and non-State actors, as documented in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/249). Sexual violence is increasingly used as a tactic of warfare and is a flagrant and unacceptable violation of international humanitarian law and of international human rights law. We are all too aware that the already staggering numbers of reported cases of sexual violence in conflict represent a mere fraction of their true number. Furthermore, sexual violence in conflict has become both a cause and a consequence of forced displacement.

We are appalled by acts of sexual violence, including rape, child, early and forced marriage, and enslavement, committed by terrorist groups. Moreover, we are alarmed that such acts have become part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, including as a means of recruitment, financing, intimidation and the destruction of communities, in line with resolution 2331 (2016). Such heinous acts must be put to an end, perpetrators must be brought to justice and victims and survivors of such crimes must be assisted in a comprehensive manner in order to fully recover from such violations and be able to reintegrate into their societies.

We underline that a climate of impunity discourages reporting, undermines assistance and abets further violations. Addressing sexual violence in conflict must be seen as a means of conflict prevention. We therefore call for accountability for crimes of sexual violence in armed conflict, including those amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide. The effective investigation and documentation of sexual violence in armed conflict is instrumental in ensuring access to justice for victims by holding perpetrators to account. We have several important accountability mechanisms in place. However, accountability also depends on adequate legal and evidentiary frameworks to prosecute such crimes. In that regard, we highlight the international protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict, as well as the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Furthermore, we recommend that international accountability mechanisms and the Security Council's own sanctions regimes be mandated and resourced to investigate sexual violence in conflict specifically. We welcome efforts to bring Da'esh and other terrorist groups to justice for crimes its members have committed in conflict, including sexual violence. But we must also remember that the military defeat of perpetrators is not a substitute for prosecuting crimes and recognizing the suffering of victims.

Accountability and the prevention of sexual violence should be included in peace agreements, including, where appropriate, in transitional justice mechanisms promoting justice, truth, reparations, and measures to prevent their reoccurrence. Amnesties should not be granted to perpetrators of sexual violence, and sexual violence should be explicitly prohibited by the terms of ceasefires and peace agreements. Within the United Nations, Force Commanders should meet more often with civil society, and troop- and police-contributing countries should deploy more women as channels for vital early warning information.

Accountability must be accompanied by effective and multi-sectoral support to survivors, whose deep trauma can persist long after the conflict has ended. Greater efforts are needed at all levels to ensure that survivors have access to the full range of livelihood, legal, psychosocial and non-discriminatory medical services. We must stand in solidarity with survivors not just in words but also in actions. Additionally, humanitarian assistance has to address sexual and gender-based violence by preventive as well as responsive measures, and should be based on a gender-sensitive programmatic approach.

Furthermore, we must not allow the crime of sexual violence to be compounded by the shame of stigma, the consequences of which are all too real and often deadly. Such stigma only exacerbates the marginalization of survivors and is a barrier to their full recovery and reintegration in their societies. Societies, including traditional and religious leaders, must rally to support survivors. We must declare once and for all that shame rests on the perpetrators, not on their victims.

Let me conclude by noting that inequalities give rise to and exacerbate conflict-related sexual violence, which will continue to occur so long as the inequalities that give rise to such acts persist. For that, and so many other reasons, it is incumbent upon Member States to redouble their efforts to achieve gender equality, realize women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights and empower all women and girls to become full and active participants in their societies.

Let me now make five short additional points in my capacity as the representative of Canada.

First and foremost, Canada is outraged by the scale and scope of sexual violence in conflict situations. While we have witnessed some progress in other areas of the women and peace and security agenda, it appears that the scourge of sexual violence in conflict is worsening and becoming ever more cruel and widespread.

Secondly, the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war demands an effective and timely response. Member States cannot simply denounce the situation without taking actions within their power to assist survivors. That is why Canada contributes to Justice Rapid Response in order to help respond to and investigate sexual violence. It is also why we have committed to hosting approximately 1,200 survivors of Da'esh this year, in particular vulnerable Yazidi women and children and their families. We welcome the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and of the United Kingdom to address the stigma that befalls the survivors.

Thirdly, we will also continue to work to prevent such acts from occurring in the first place. In that regard, it is essential to recall the importance of engaging men and boys in prevention.

Fourthly, while men constitute the large majority of perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, we should be mindful that men and boys are also victims. It is therefore imperative that the States Members of the United Nations ensure that any gender analysis considers the impact of sexual violence in conflict on men and boys as well as women and girls.

Finally, it is incumbent upon all States Members of the United Nations to be part of the solution, not the problem, of sexual violence in conflict. Canada remains deeply concerned by all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff, peacekeepers and non-United Nations forces. Member States, including all members of the Security Council, must back their pledges for zero tolerance with concrete and effective action for their own personnel. Importantly, they must not stand in the way of key initiatives proposed by the Secretary-General to help rid the United Nations of this cancer. The Security Council can count on Canada to play its part in addressing this vital issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): First of all, let me thank Uruguay for organizing today's very important open debate. We would also like to thank Ms. Zainab Bangura for her outstanding work as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in

Conflict, and we welcome Ms. Pramila Patten in that important role.

Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would also like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Hungary is deeply concerned by the widespread and growing threat and use of sexual violence in armed conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism. The international community must not tolerate sexual violence in any form or context. We are appalled to see that sexual violence is not only an integral part of the ideology of violent extremist and terrorist groups, but also a cold-blooded strategy for financing and recruitment through sex trafficking, sexual slavery, the extortion of ransoms and forced displacement.

The impact of sexual violence in armed conflict is dramatic for survivors and detrimental to communities. Individuals do not only suffer serious and long-term physical and psychological harm, they also face stigma, double victimization, trauma, the risk of discrimination and social exclusion. For communities, sexual violence means a form of collective persecution of ethnic and religious minorities; the loss of their identity through forced conversion and indoctrination and the destruction of their social fabric through forced marriage and stigmatization.

That complex and more serious issue must be tackled in a comprehensive way. There must be justice and accountability for such horrendous crimes, underpinned by efficient investigation, documentation and reporting mechanisms to prevent impunity and future violence and to break the conflict cycle. In that regard, we highly appreciate the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. Moreover, Hungary is proud to financially support and contribute to the invaluable work of the gender advisers deployed by UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response, and to the work of UN-Women to prevent violent extremism.

Survivors need immediate, comprehensive victim- and witness-protection and -support. Women and men, girls and boys alike should be given context-specific assistance for their socioeconomic reintegration into their communities. For that we need not only top-down policies, but also bottom-up, community-driven responses against stigma, in cooperation with traditional and community leaders, faith-based organizations and families alike.

To tackle conflict-related sexual violence in the long run, we should build a robust preventive architecture that includes early warning, strengthened national legal and policy frameworks and justice systems and gender-sensitivity training of security-sector and peacekeeping personnel, and that ensures the presence of women's protection advisers in all peacekeeping operations.

Hungary is an active contributor to initiatives to combat sexual violence in conflict. The Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade will organize an awareness-raising workshop this summer on women and peace and security for experts of the relevant ministries, the army, the police, peacekeeping personnel, interested civil society organizations and academics. Only together can we tackle sexual violence in armed conflict. That will be one of the topics under discussion at that conference. We have to do our utmost, including through concerted action, to tackle the scourge of sexual violence in conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting on a very important subject that impacts the lives of too many people, in particular women and children, in conflicts that are already horrendous in so many ways.

Estonia aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

This is not just another debate or another issue on our agenda. The urgency of tackling conflict-related sexual violence cannot be emphasized enough. It is the responsibility of all States to combat impunity and enforce accountability by prosecuting those responsible for such dreadful crimes against civilians. There must be no room for impunity for sexual or gender-based crimes. However, today only a limited number of the perpetrators of sexual violence have been brought to justice. A lack of accountability for these crimes undermines international peace and security and hampers post-conflict peacebuilding. We therefore welcome the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2017/249) that the Security Council should influence State and non-State actors in conflict zones to comply with international law, including by referring matters to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Furthermore, it is important to take full advantage of the existing tools and mechanisms and to continue to include sexual violence as a part of the designation criteria for sanctions. In addition, we urge the countries experiencing conflict-related sexual violence to reach out and learn from the cases where the issue has been tackled successfully, such as in Côte d'Ivoire. Those examples show that, with a strong will and the support of the United Nations and the international community, good results can be achieved in a timely manner.

However, in order to bring perpetrators to justice, it is crucial that the victims of conflict-related sexual violence report such cases and not be held back by fear, shame or stigma. That once more serves to emphasize the importance of awareness-raising and changing social norms and mindsets. Victims of sexual violence must be assisted with legal, medical and other relevant services to avoid their expulsion from communities and to prevent double victimization.

Every country can make a difference in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Estonia has taken steps at both the national and international levels. At the global level, we have supported the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and made regular contributions to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims. Likewise, Estonia has supported the fight against conflict-related sexual violence through the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

At the national level, Estonia has made important progress with regard to the fight against violence against women and sexual abuse of children. For example, victims of human trafficking, unaccompanied under-age foreigners and sexually abused minors have the right to receive counselling services and psychological help. Furthermore, Estonia considers it important to address sexual violence in conflict as a part of the broader women and peace and security agenda. We have therefore incorporated the subject of human trafficking and gender-based violence into all our pre-mission trainings.

Regardless of our common efforts and achievements, much work remains to be done in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence. Estonia hopes that the topic will remain high on our agenda and calls for comprehensive cooperation by all Member States to combat crimes against humanity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Archbishop Auza: The Holy See thanks the Uruguayan presidency for bringing this unsettling topic to an open debate in this Chamber, and thus to the entire international community.

My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2017/249) on conflict-related sexual violence, which describes the horrendous impact these crimes have on women and girls and on entire communities.

The term "conflict-related sexual violence" covers a wide range of sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage, as well as trafficking in persons, when perpetrated in situations of conflict for the purpose of sexual violence or exploitation. As appalling and criminal as these forms of sexual violence are, my delegation wishes to draw specific attention to the use of sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of terrorism.

The motives behind this particularly heinous crime, enumerated in the Secretary-General's report, constitutes a litany of evil that includes incentivizing the recruitment of terrorists, terrorizing and displacing populations, forcing religious conversion through marriage, suppressing women's fundamental rights, generating revenues through sex trafficking, extorting ransom from desperate families, giving women and girls as war spoils to compensate fighters, who are then entitled to resell or to exploit them as they wish, and using women and girls as human shields and suicide bombers. The immeasurable suffering of so many women, who continue today to be victims of such cruelty, cannot but put fire under our feet to spur us all to action. The Holy See therefore appeals to the international community through the Security Council to give priority to this particularly horrendous violence against women and children.

There is no need of further evidence to document the fact that women and girls are being specifically targeted as a tactic in order to incite fear, crush their will and generate revenues for the terror machine. Pope Francis has reminded the diplomatic community that we must not overlook the horrendous crime of rape in conflict, which is a most grave offense against the dignity of women, who are not only violated in body

but also in spirit, resulting in a trauma hard to erase and with effects on entire societies as well.

In the face of these heinous crimes, there exists, first for States and then for the international community, a grave responsibility to protect those who are exposed to war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide or ethnic cleansing. The international community is called upon to encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility. Conflict-related sexual violence, in particular sexual violence as an instrument of terrorism, undoubtedly falls within this pressing and profound responsibility to protect. The prevailing impunity of those who have committed such crimes clearly illustrates the urgency of fulfilling this duty.

The urgent need to act in order to spare women and girls from becoming prey for such atrocious tactics in conflicts should accompany, and even embolden, States' common efforts and resolute will to bring conflicts to an end and to adopt coordinated solutions through dialogue and mediation efforts and through post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation measures. There is no need to recall also that the role of women in such an endeavour is essential. It should not be an afterthought or considered simply as something politically correct, but rather as an indispensable contribution to all our peace and security efforts designed to spare our world from further scourges of war and violence.

A week ago, Pope Francis once again warned that the culture of destruction is spreading throughout the world and that we are experiencing a new massacre of men and women and children who suffer and die as a result of war and migration, or who are being exploited for someone else's personal interests. In response to this culture of violence, the world, especially the women and girls whose dignity is being savagely violated, looks to the Security Council for hope and action. Let us remember their faces and show them by our action that they do not hope in vain.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Uruguay for organizing today's debate and welcome the presence of its Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. José Luis Cancela. Chile takes this opportunity to express its thanks to the briefers for their statements and to Ms. Zainab Bangura, whose mandate as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict is coming to an end, for her work.

As described in the latest report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, the depth and breadth of this scourge is of concern to us. The manifestations of this violence are not limited to rape alone, but include other serious crimes, such as forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and other shameful forms of sexual violence. Of special concern to us is the fact that this violence is a tactic of terrorism, used not only to intimidate and demoralize the population but also as a source of income for financing terrorist tactics.

Greater awareness of the seriousness of this problem is required for there to be sufficient understanding of how to implement measures needed for prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration. In that regard, we have noted with interest initiatives such as that put forward by the United Kingdom on preventing sexual violence in conflict and stigmatization. Similarly, the guidance note of the Secretary-General on reparations for conflict-related sexual violence, of June 2014, offers guidelines and best practices for us to consider. We also believe that we must promote and protect the work of journalists reporting on these crimes. They risk their security in their work of exposing and combating impunity. We also welcome the deployment in United Nations missions of women's protection advisers, who have, inter alia, helped improve access to and the quality of information.

Ensuring that justice is served is essential if victims are to have some level of spiritual and material compensation. That is why the international community must combat impunity. Furthermore, the non-applicability of statutes of limitations for these crimes is a fundamental tool for ensuring just compensation. Trust funds set up for such purposes — for example, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims — are a step in the right direction and require sustainable financial support.

We must broaden and intensify our efforts aimed at prevention. Educational programmes at all levels are required, particularly in armed forces, including for contingents participating in peacekeeping operations. The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions, as well as the drafting by countries of national plans, is key for prevention. Chile's second

national plan has expanded the training and education it offers to include the gender perspective, sexual violence and the human rights of women in peacekeeping operations, both for police and military components and for civilian staff participating in such operations, or at any stage of conflict-resolution and post-conflict processes. We express our solidarity with the victims of this serious transgression and the subsequent stigmatization from which many of them suffer, which we must eradicate by making every effort to expose those who are responsible, namely, the perpetrators of these crimes and those who incite them to commit such atrocities.

In conclusion, we would like to extend our solidarity to the victims of this serious scourge and express our gratitude to all actors devoted to eradicating it, including civil society and its efforts in this area.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. O'Toole (Ireland): We thank Uruguay for convening today's debate.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Observer of the European Union and with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

I also pay tribute to the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and wish the new Special Representative, Ms. Pramila Patten, success as she takes up her important role.

The recent report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General highlights the various challenges we face in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Ireland would like to emphasize three areas we feel are in need of particular attention today.

First, in terms of the link between sexual violence and trafficking, sexual violence in trafficking are issues that must be dealt with by all countries. However, in times of war, relevant prevention and protection mechanisms are almost completely eroded, allowing the activities of terrorist groups and criminal networks to thrive. Resolution 2331 (2016) is our strongest legal instrument yet for highlighting the relationship between sexual violence and trafficking in situations of conflict. We look forward to enhanced efforts by the States Members of the United Nations and the Organization itself aimed at implementing this innovative resolution in complementarity with the women and peace and security agenda. Moreover, as Member States look towards adopting two global compacts in 2018, we hope that the vulnerability of migrants and refugees to both trafficking and sexual violence, on the one hand, and the need for women's participation in finding solutions, on the other hand, are strongly reflected in them.

Secondly, with respect to the need to place victims' needs and perspectives at the core of our work, the Secretary-General's report outlines how victims of conflict-related sexual violence can be re-victimized even after their ordeal has ended — women interrogated as potential affiliates of extremist groups instead of receiving treatment and support as victims of terrorism, children facing legal and social discrimination having been born from rape, and boys and men finding themselves excluded from victim support and redress. We commend the work of the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her team for giving a voice to those victims. We hope to see an increase in invitations to the Special Representative to brief the relevant sections committees, as well as to civil-society and victims representatives to deliver briefings in the Chamber. As a troop-contributing country, Ireland also supports further efforts to integrate the perspectives of civil society and local communities into United Nations peace operations.

Thirdly, with regard to the emphasis on prevention, we welcome the focus placed by the Secretary General's report on the link between accountability and prevention. Ireland calls for the United Nations, and in particular its Member States, to support sensitized and expert means to pursue accountability for sexual violence in conflict — for example through the work undertaken by Justice Rapid Response and the Team of Experts. Moreover, if peacekeepers deployed by the United Nations fail to prevent sexual violence, or in fact serve as the perpetrators of such crimes, as we have shockingly seen, they must be held accountable. Troop-contributing countries and the United Nations itself have clear responsibilities in that regard.

We must also pursue prevention by understanding and tackling the conditions in which sexual violence can occur. If we implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goals 5 and 16; if we make smart, sustained investments to prevent conflict and violent extremism; if we integrate the women and peace and security agenda into all of our

work on the ground; and if we reorient our peace and security architecture to foster sustaining peace, then we will be contributing to preventing future cases of sexual violence in conflict.

In conclusion, unfortunately, sexual violence in conflict has been a recurring feature of our collective history. However, the international community has never been better informed, nor has it been better equipped with legal and practical tools to tackle this scourge. The implementation of the report's recommendations would serve as a significant step towards eliminating sexual violence in conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, at the outset, to express our gratitude for the convening of this important debate. We are also grateful for the concept note (see S/2017/402, annex). I also thank today's briefers for their statements.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), Guatemala has accorded great importance to this issue. We are especially concerned that sexual violence continues to be used as an instrument of war to terrorize populations. We cannot also not allow sexual violence to be used to generate income from sexual slavery and trafficking, much less for women and girls to be offered as compensation for combatants of extremist groups.

We therefore emphatically condemn all of those brutal acts, for besides clearly violating international humanitarian law and human rights, they constitute a rejection of human dignity. We fully support the emphasis that the Secretary-General places on conflict prevention and early warning. It is at that stage that we must pay close attention in order to prevent the most vulnerable — children, women and teenagers — from having their human rights violated.

That is why we must continue to include sexual violence as a designation criterion for imposing sanctions and to ensure that sanctions committees and monitoring mechanisms base their efforts on experts specializing in gender-based and sexual violence in conflict. We consider it timely for Special Representatives to share information with sanctions committees as needed.

We must underline the undeniable role that women can and must play in peacebuilding. There is an important link between women's full and meaningful participation in preventing and resolving conflicts and in post-conflict reconciliation and rebuilding efforts and the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of such efforts. Women must participate on an equal footing when it comes to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The international community must insist on eliminating barriers to the empowerment of women in the decision-making process regarding conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding — just as they are drivers of development — and we encourage more women to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Guatemala has deployed troops in areas of armed conflict. That is why it recognized the importance of resolution 1325 (2000) in laying the foundation for integrating a gender perspective in missions on the ground. We call for the implementation of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and commend the initiative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that troop-contributing countries distribute, to their entire staff, pocket-sized cards entitled "There is no excuse", which would clearly spell out the rules and prohibitions for behaviours linked to sexual abuse and exploitation.

Guatemala is currently drafting its action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) through what we call an inter-institutional table on women and peace and security. The draft will be implemented shortly.

Finally, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Nevertheless, we understand that the scope and nature of the challenge involved in sustaining peace requires strategic and operational alliances between the United Nations and Governments, as well as other key stakeholders, if we are to jointly achieve sustainable peace. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is the most progressive international legal framework for gender-based crimes. We must incorporate it into national contexts so that States can have a comprehensive framework for investigating international crimes of sexual and gender-based violence.

Finally, my delegation believes that this topic must remain on the Council's agenda, given its interlinkages with the pillars of peace and security, development and human rights. We have in our hands two important tools at our disposal — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development and sustainable peace. Let us use them and together build a sustainable and harmonious future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Winid (Poland): Let me begin by thanking Uruguay for organizing this timely debate.

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, but I would like to add some comments in my national capacity.

Since the adoption of resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013), which recognize rape and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity, there have been several positive developments in addressing those issues.

First of all, combating sexual violence has been included in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, while the international community has begun to deploy gender advisers and female protection officers trained in sexual violence issues.

Secondly, the availability and quality of data on sexual crimes has improved and many perpetrators have been brought to justice, as happened in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Uganda.

Thirdly, awareness-raising campaigns and greater involvement by the international community have played a key role in legislative reforms in conflict-affected countries where rape had not been previously recognized as a crime.

Finally, since 2010, the number of national action plans has increased, with many countries havikng implemented national strategies aimed at providing assistance to victims and survivors of sexual violence.

Yet, unfortunately, sexual violence is still used as a weapon of war and a systematic tactic of terrorism and torture and, in some cases, continues to be widespread and to go unpunished.

There is still silent consent with regard to sexual violence in some conflicts, which continues to be underreported, mainly due to the sociocultural stigma it represents and a general lack of awareness, but also because of the fear of reprisals and the lack or weakness of institutions and services.

There is an urgent need to hold perpetrators accountable and to provide victims and survivors with basic services, such as health care, psychological support, financial aid, legal assistance and socioeconomic reintegration services.

The international community faces multiple challenges with regard to conflict-related sexual violence. New trends, including an increase in violent extremism and mass migration, may trigger incidents of trafficking in persons for purposes of sexual exploitation and violence. Such incidents disproportionately affect women and children from ethnic and religious minorities. In that regard, let me thank Spain for bringing forward resolution 2331 (2016), which establishes the link between human trafficking and conflict-related sexual violence.

There is in fact political will to address the issue of conflict-related sexual violence, but more needs to be done to fight the culture of impunity. Combating sexual violence in conflict is an integral part of the wider conflict-prevention agenda, and we should spare no effort to tackle the problem holistically. Raising awareness about the scale of sexual violence in conflict and its impact on societies is the first step. One example is the successful initiative of Argentina and its General Assembly resolution 69/293, proclaiming 19 June as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. It draws the attention of the international community to the problem while honouring the victims and survivors and paying tribute to all of those involved in eradicating those crimes.

Secondly, there must be training for medical staff, military and police personnel, lawyers, prosecutors and judges in gender sensitivity and ways to better prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence and other forms of violence against civilians. They must be trained in facilitating the reporting of crimes related to sexual violence. Such programmes must include predeployment training, the deployment of more female gender advisers and measures for ensuring greater representation of women in national police services in order to facilitate survivors' reporting about cases of sexual violence.

The allocation of adequate financial resources is another important point. As a proof of our commitment, the Polish Government last year contributed 2.5 million zlotys to the UNICEF operation in Mosul, Iraq, providing assistance to thousands of Christian and Yazidi women and girls fleeing from the horrors of trafficking, forced marriage and sexual enslavement perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Last but not least, cooperation among conflict-affected Governments, civil society and the international community cannot be underestimated. One of the best examples of fostering collaboration among various stakeholders is the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, which was launched five years ago by the United Kingdom.

Let me conclude on a positive note by commending Colombia for developing an exemplary legal framework for addressing conflict-related sexual violence, and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for its policies to provide services, justice and reparations for survivors. Their commitments could serve as an example for State and non-State actors from other conflict-affected area on ways to address this difficult issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): We convey our appreciation to the Uruguayan presidency for convening this open debate. We also thank the briefers for sharing their insights. And we acknowledge the commendable role played by Ms. Zainab Bangura as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We wish her successor the very best.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249) is a glaring testimony to the increasing trends and concerns about sexual violence being used by both State and non-State actors as part of their ideologies and operations. Bangladesh joins other delegations in condemning the use of sexual violence during conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

As Mr. Adama Dieng recounted this morning, there are far too many instances of the egregious use of sexual violence in conflict. During our war of liberation in 1971, sexual violence was committed on a mass scale against our women and girls, leaving behind in its wake 200,000 victims. In a war-ravaged country it was nearly impossible to ensure adequate protection, rehabilitation and reintegration for such a large number of victims. The overriding priority was to find custody and shelter for children born of such violence, who were abandoned in most cases. It took us more than four decades to ensure official recognition and compensation for some of the victims who mustered the courage to make themselves known and heard. The work of bringing the perpetrators to account remains an unfinished agenda.

In our modest effort to come to terms with that painful legacy, we took up the issue of women and peace and security as a critical element of our engagement in the United Nations, especially during our membership in the Security Council from 2000 to 2001. We take heart that the suffering experienced by hundreds and thousands of women in Bangladesh and around the world at least paved the way for brave young women like Nadia Mourad and Mina Jaf to appear and eloquently make their cases before the Council.

Despite our collective efforts, the magnitude of sexual violence in conflict is still overwhelming and appears to be pursued in an environment of near impunity and denial. In recent times, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international inquiry commissions visited Bangladesh to gather first-hand accounts of persecution and sexual violence against a group of people fleeing from a neighbouring country into our territory. We hope that the perpetrators will be brought to justice and that those displaced and victimized will be allowed to return to their homes in safety and dignity, with their nationality restored.

The inhumane use of sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism has duly raised alarm in the international community. The Council responded to that growing threat by adopting resolution 2331 (2016), which highlights the nexus between trafficking in persons and terrorism. Echoing the resolution, Bangladesh condemns the use of sexual violence by terrorists and violent extremists in order to generate revenue, attract or enlist new recruits and perpetuate conflict and instability.

In our national context, as we remain engaged in a sustained counter-terrorism drive, we see a rather new trend among terrorists and violent extremists to use women and children, mostly family members, to expand their ranks. In certain cases, some of those women acted as human shields, along with their children, with fatal consequences. Our authorities have taken the utmost caution to ensure that the women and children rescued from such operations are given due protection, including in custody, and not exposed to stigma.

Our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, has called upon all women and mothers to work as sentinels

within their families and to actively contribute to the whole-of-society response against violent extremism and radicalization. We remain determined to forge ahead with our women's development and empowerment efforts to defeat the violent extremists and terrorists in one of their fundamental pursuits.

The overriding messages emanating from today's open debate appear to be largely unanimous and demand our urgent and unmitigated attention. My delegation reaffirms the call for, first, shattering the culture of impunity around sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism through independent and impartial investigation and prosecution.

Secondly, the burden of stigma must be shifted from the victims to perpetrators. Adequate protection, compensation and legal and psychosocial support for victims must be ensured, while investing in the capacities of national judicial, law enforcement and correction systems to provide such support in a timely manner.

Thirdly, the tools at the disposal of the Security Council to prevent and resolve conflicts, as well as to combat terrorism, must be used, including through the application of sanctions as required, and in coordination with other relevant organs and entities of the United Nations system pursuant to their respective mandates.

Fourthly, meaningful participation by women and girls in peace processes, including in mediation and peacebuilding, must be ensured.

Fifthly, we must strengthen protection for refugees and migrants in host countries and societies, with in-built support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Bangladesh believes that preventing sexual violence is an integral part of the mandate to protect civilians given to peacekeeping missions. We remain committed to training our peacekeepers on sexual and gender-based violence, enhancing the participation of female peacekeepers in our contingents and encouraging our force and sector commanders to maintain regular involvement with local communities and civil society actors, among others. We condemn any allegation of sexual exploitation or abuse by peacekeepers or other United Nations staff, and we underscore the primacy of zero tolerance for such aberrations by those that are mandated to protect the vulnerable.

The inherent resilience of our women gives us the conviction that women themselves have the capacity to act as agents of change provided they find themselves in an enabling environment. As we continue to work towards leaving no one behind, we must step up our collective efforts to address all forms of inequities, discrimination and obstacles that stand in the way of unleashing the full potential of our women and girls.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate and for the great commitment of your country and all Council members in their recent visit to Colombia. I am sure that, after the Council's visit to my country, delegations were able to see first-hand how important the gender issue has been in the negotiations on the peace agreement and going forward in the implementation phase.

Colombia endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. I would like to begin by mentioning the progress noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia (S/2017/252) and the support given by the Office of Special Representative Bangura, who personally, along with Executive Director of UN-Women Mlambo-Ngcuka, travelled to Havana and were able to see first-hand the process as it developed and to publicly express their commitment to providing support to survivors of sexual violence in our country. It is worth underscoring the strategy designed by the peace process negotiators, as there were many women team members: the gender subcommittee that was established and which ensured that whatever was agreed would meet the particular needs of women and girls; and that, in the implementation phase, 20 per cent of the military and civilian observers of the special political mission designated by the Security Council are now women.

As the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay and other members said this morning, it is important that women be actively involved in the peace process and now in the implementation process. In the light of the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249), Colombia is committed to ensuring that the mechanisms stemming from the agreement place particular attention on the rights of victims, including

victims of sexual violence, in particular women and girls, in the context of the armed conflict in my country.

I would also like to underscore the establishment of the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which define crimes of sexual violence committed in the framework of the armed conflict as crimes that do not qualify for amnesty. We must know the truth about all these events, sentence those who committed them and provide reparations for victims. A second important step that was taken in the legislative area is the approval this month in the Congress of the Republic of the constitutional amendment that establishes a special jurisdiction for peace and a unit in charge of investigations, which will include a special team for cases of sexual violence.

The peace agreements reached in Colombia are just a road map that will allow us to initiate a long process of reconciliation, which could be more challenging, as it requires restoring victims' rights and establishing decent living conditions in the countryside. In the peace agreement, we envisioned that this process would take at least 15 years and the women and peace and security agenda will play a crucial role.

Colombia recognizes the impetus and contributions provided by civil society, which has been mentioned throughout this open debate, especially women's organizations, which played an active role in the Council's recent visit. Council members were able to interact with women's organizations and it added real substance to the human rights and peacebuilding agenda because these organizations are the ones that contribute and help the Government effectively implement early warning and prevention mechanisms to address sexual violence.

Finally, we are aware that enormous challenges still lie ahead and I am certain that international cooperation will be key to finding solutions and to sharing experiences and lessons learned, which may be useful for other countries. We therefore offer our experiences as to how we have been able to make progress in providing redress to victims of sexual violence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Government of Uruguay for taking the initiative to organize this debate and for circulating the concept note (S/2017/402, annex) to guide our discussions. We are also grateful for the statements of the Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mr. Adama Dieng; and Ms. Mina Jaf from Women's Refugee Route, on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Argentina strongly supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. It welcomes the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) and fully endorses its recommendations aimed at preventing, combating and eliminating all forms of sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations and in the actions of terrorist groups and violent extremists and aimed at seeking justice and reparation for victims.

In that context, allow me to express the Argentine Government's gratitude for the work done by the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her arduous and dedicated efforts over the past five years, during which time she achieved a great deal, including the establishment in 2015, through General Assembly resolution 69/293, of 19 June as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. In this context, I recall that, on 20 June, Argentina will organize, together with the Offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and an interregional group of Member States the second formal observance of that International Day. We also welcome the appointment of the new Special Representative, Ms. Pramila Patten, and we wish her every success in the complex task that lies ahead and assure her of Argentina's unwavering support during her mandate.

The increasing use and threat of crimes of sexual violence against women, girls, men and boys by non-State armed groups, terrorist groups and violent extremists and other State actors as a strategy of recruitment and financing, with the aim of terrorizing, intimidating and stigmatizing specific groups, namely, women, children, religious minorities, LGBT people, displaced persons and so forth, constitute the most serious international crimes. Various international

tribunals have established sexual violence as an act of torture, a war crime, a crime against humanity and an act of genocide. Such crimes must be prevented and punished in accordance with the law and we must make use of available tools and mechanisms, including sanctions, and referring cases to the International Criminal Court.

We must continue to join and redouble the efforts of all actors involved in order to find effective and immediate solutions on the ground aimed at ensuring respect for international law and to prevent, combat and eradicate crimes of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations and the trafficking in persons. We must bring the perpetrators of such war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice; and we must protect, contain, assist and reintegrate victims of such violations through the provision of multisectoral and multidisciplinary assistance services with a gender perspective and reparation measures and protect their dignity and human rights.

A key element in preventing sexual violence in conflict is addressing the risk factors and underlying conditions that leave some groups more vulnerable to sexual violence, compounding their victimization, trauma, marginalization and stigma. It is also essential to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes be held accountable, while improving capacities for documenting and investigating cases of sexual violence and improving cooperation and the exchange of information and best practices in the areas of research, documentation, identifying and assisting victims, extradition and legal aid. In that regard, we would like to highlight the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and the roster of experts on sexual and gender-based violence overseen by UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response.

Such goals should continue to be our priority and be taken into consideration by the Security Council when defining the mandates of it peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as in its peacebuilding efforts, by incorporating specialists on gender and sexual and gender-based violence into its missions and mediation team,s as well as including specific related provisions and commitments in peace and ceasefire agreements and increasing the percentage of women in peacekeeping forces and military and police contingents.

We should nonetheless not omit to mention the cases of sexual exploitation and abuse that continue to occur in peacekeeping missions. This is a very serious situation that poses a major challenge to the legitimacy and future of such missions and the to image of the United Nations. In that regard, Argentina continues to strongly support the Secretary-General's policy of zero tolerance, as well as the various measures proposed in his reports and included in resolution 2272 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 71/278, among others, as well as the work on coordination and prevention of Ms. Jane Holl-Lute, Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

In conclusion, we reiterate that sexual violence in conflict represents one of the most atrocious and terrible violations of human dignity and an undeniable and persistent threat to international peace and security. That is why we must continue to work together to ensure the protection, promotion and full enjoyment of their human rights by all men and women, boys and girls, on an equal footing, and to redouble our commitment to preventing and eradicating such crimes, while holding their perpetrators to account and making their victims the focus of our efforts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): I am delivering this statement on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

The persisting impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence is intolerable. The numbing stigma must be dealt with. When people flee to safety, we should make it our priority to ensure that they are not exposed to new abuse. The problem of sexual violence must be addressed in ceasefire agreements. It must be on the table in peace negotiations, part of our analysis in humanitarian efforts and at the forefront in our peacekeeping operations.

We must deal with inconsistencies. Rape is often treated as a burden that the woman must bear by herself, while a gun wound is a matter of national security. Yet sexual violence undermines the societies that we are striving to stabilize and rebuild. It destroys the future, as well as the present, for many more than those directly affected. That fact should serve to mobilize our whole peace and security architecture. If we are serious about

sustaining peace, we must ensure that prevention is not just a priority but the main priority. And when we have been unable to prevent abuse, our approach must be focused on those who have suffered the crime. We must fight the stigma, investigate and prosecute.

Our response to conflict-related sexual violence must be firm and all-encompassing. Impunity is unacceptable, and perpetrators must be held accountable. The International Criminal Court plays a central role at the international level in the fight against impunity, but the capacities of national authorities must also be strengthened. States have a primary duty to prevent, investigate and prosecute sexual violence.

We value the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and the unique capacity of Justice Rapid Response, in cooperation with UN-Women, which provide the needed expertise for investigating sexual and gender-based violence. We support the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, led by Sweden, and appreciate the work of civil society, which remains key.

Also, United Nations peacekeeping operations must have the capacity to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence and other human rights violations in communities where they operate. Female peacekeepers play an especially crucial role, and increasing the number of women serving in peace operations is therefore also vital from that perspective. We deploy many women police and are striving to increase the number of women in our military contingents, because we want the best, irrespective of gender. A diverse team delivers better. We train our military and police personnel before deployment and in-mission on sexual and gender-based violence, and support the African Union and African countries in their efforts in this area.

The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations is a resource, as is Sweden's handbook for gender mainstreaming in operations. In cooperation with key partners, Norway recently started to develop a handbook for military staff in United Nations operations on preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict. We thank the Secretary-General for his leadership in working to ensure that the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and we hope it will become a reality. The Nordic network of women mediators is evolving, and more such networks are forming. We must draw on their experience and competence.

The need for gender competence and inter-regional exchange is growing as people are on the move and facing new vulnerabilities as they seek new opportunities. It should spur us all to act more strategically and forcefully.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to remind delegations that there are still 30 speakers remaining on my list, and therefore I would be very grateful to all of them if they would limit their statements to no more than four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Panama.

Ms. Flores Herrera (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to express our appreciation to the Republic of Uruguay for taking the initiative to propose today's timely debate.

We would like to emphasize the normative value of the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the first instrument to establish the causal relationship between the experiences of women in conflict and the international peace and security agenda and to draw attention to the disproportionate impact of conflicts on women. Today, more than ever, that resolution and those that have followed it are particularly relevant.

Violence against women is increasing and worsening, in particular when carried out by violent extremist groups as a tactic of war and terrorism to attack their fundamental rights, human dignity, personal integrity and their supreme right to life.

Increasing the role of women in conflict prevention, in the resolution of conflicts and in United Nations peace operations, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2242 (2015), is an encouraging new sign when it comes to increasing the leadership role and the rights of women. However, it is urgent that we implement effective strategies and fully integrate the gender perspective in our agenda.

We welcome the appeal made by Secretary-General and the efforts of the Organization to implement the zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse carried out by United Nations peacekeepers. In that regard, we need to improve the mechanisms

for prevention, reduce the time of investigations and, ultimately, eradicate this unacceptable behaviour.

Panama is firmly committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of women. We attach particular importance to initiatives undertaken by UN-Women, such as Justice Rapid Response and the Women's Alliance in Accountability for Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Violence.

We welcome the efforts of the informal group of experts on resolution 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security, and of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also underscore the adoption, as part of Council sanctions regimes, of criteria for identifying individuals or entities for their role in the promotion or carrying out of sexual violence.

The manifold armed conflicts that we are facing, unfortunately, show that women continue to be a group especially affected by sexual violence. In recent years we have seen how sexual violence has become part and parcel of the ideology, operations, strategic objectives and financing of non-State armed groups, terrorist groups and violent extremists.

The review of the women and peace and security agenda carried out in 2015 served to underscore the need to include the significant role of women in combating terrorism and radicalization. That gives new meaning to achieving gender equality in this struggle.

Violent extremism has increased and has degenerated into the worst forms of violence against women, using sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism, as a form of religious and ethnic persecution and as a means of interrogation, funding and recruitment. There is therefore an obligation on the part of States to bolster collective efforts and preventive and corrective measures at the national and international levels. In addition, that requires a focus on all stages of the peace process and the post-conflict reconstruction.

We must establish socioeconomic reintegration plans in communities of survivors of sexual violence, including children born as a result of this violence, so that women and children do not become double victims. We must also consider establishing effective judicial mechanisms to punish the perpetrators of these crimes and to support victims in a way that recognizes their rights to truth, justice and reparation.

I would like to underscore the significant importance of historic rulings of the International Criminal Court, such as the 210 Bemba case and 2017 Ntaganda case, which consolidate the status of sexual violence as a war crime and crime against humanity. However, due to the complementary jurisdiction of the Court, we must also promote the effective national-level implementation of existing instruments on this issue, including adopting strong internal measures to prevent and combat sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts.

In conclusion, Panama believes that the role that women can and must play in preventing and resolving conflicts and in the building and decision-making in sustainable peace processes is fundamental. Thus, the equality and the empowerment agendas take on greater meaning and constitute a global commitment. Our strategic considerations to combat sexual violence against women in situations of conflicts must be based on international law and be inspired by the best interests and well-being of all humankind.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her briefing. Let me also congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. I wish her success in her endeavours and take this opportunity to assure her of Turkey's firm support for her mandate. We also commend the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The severe effects of the conflicts in various regions today, especially on women and girls, continue to constitute a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, the annual report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence once again reveals a daunting picture. The current trends and emerging concerns pertaining to the increased use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and terrorism require a robust international response. We welcome and support the Secretary-General's strong emphasis on the importance of prevention. We also agree with his approach that preventing sexual violence is an integral part of wider conflict prevention.

When used or commissioned as a tactic of war or as a systematic attack against a civilian population, sexual

violence significantly aggravates the severe effects of an armed conflict. Perpetrators continue to employ sexual violence, mostly combined with other crimes, such as killing, forced displacement, arbitrary detention and torture. In fact, the nexus between conflict-related sexual violence and terrorism, human trafficking and organized crime has become more pertinent than ever.

With that in mind, the despicable acts perpetrated against women and girls by terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh and Boko Haram, deserve every condemnation. The use of sexual violence, including the sale and trade of women and girls, as a tactic of terror by Da'esh in Iraq and Syria reflects the appalling nature of that terrorist organization. While Turkey continues to fight against Da'esh with all its means, we believe that it is high time for the international community to act in unity for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to eliminate the root causes of this menace.

Although in a different context, it is also befitting to underline that the terrorist organization the Kurdistan Workers' Party/Democratic Union Party (PKK/PYD) likewise resorts to abuse and exploitation of women and children. The terrorist leadership of the PKK/PYD is known to commit sexual violence and abuse, even towards its female recruits. That includes rape, forced pregnancy and abortion and the carrying out of sexual-abuse related executions.

We are witnessing new complexities around the nature of conflicts. The increasing number of protracted conflicts, forced displacement and humanitarian emergencies create an environment conducive to the trafficking of women and girls. Trafficking often involves sexual violence and exploitation. Turkey attaches the utmost importance to the fight against human trafficking, which constitutes a violation of human rights and an offence to the dignity and the integrity of the human being. In that regard, we recall the importance of resolution 2331 (2016), which Turkey co-sponsored.

As the crisis in Syria enters its seventh year, sexual violence continues to be used by various parties as a systematic tactic of warfare, terrorism and torture. Millions of Syrians, particularly women and girls, continue to live under the threat of sexual violence. The horrific acts of sexual violence perpetrated in the detention facilities run by the Syrian regime have been documented in various United Nations reports. In that context, Turkey's efforts pertaining to the release of detainees and prisoners by the conflicting parties within the framework of the Astana talks are all the more relevant.

Furthermore, as a neighbouring country, we continue to follow an open door policy with regard to Syrians fleeing war and violence in their own country — there are now over 3 million Syrians living in Turkey. Empowering and ensuring self-reliance, notably of Syrian women and youth, without any bearing of sexual and gender-based violence, is of crucial importance for us. That is why we exert every effort to provide security and safety for them.

Last but not least, I would like to underline that Turkey attaches the utmost importance to strengthening the efforts aimed at implementing the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. In that regard, we commend and support the Secretary-General's efforts towards making zero tolerance a reality.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Mrs. Jakubonė (Lithuania): We thank the Uruguayan presidency for convening this open debate on an issue that plagues and exacerbates many contemporary conflicts.

At the outset, we sincerely commend Ms. Zainab Bangura for her hard work and dedication as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict over the past few years. We also congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her recent appointment and we wish her success. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the other briefers — Mr. Dieng and Ms. Jaf — for their critical contributions and testimonies.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statements delivered by the observer of the European Union and on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

Almost a decade has passed since the Security Council recognized sexual violence as a tactic of war. Despite all the efforts of the international community, conflict-related sexual violence remains an acute issue. It is becoming more complex, with ever-increasing violent extremism and terrorism, displacement driven by conflict, mass migration and human trafficking, abduction and rape, forced marriage and pregnancy, enslavement and the use of girls as suicide bombers. These are not isolated crimes, but a tactic of terrorism

employed by State and non-State actors alike and aimed at achieving strategic objectives, including financing and recruitment, displacement, destruction and persecution. The only way to effectively address the scourge is a comprehensive and integrated approach that entails prevention, early warning, justice and accountability, the participation of women in political processes and their political, social and economic empowerment.

We all agree that the responsibility to protect the civilian population from gender-based and sexual violence in conflict lies with States. To that end, having an adequate judiciary and penal framework is essential, as is making sure that national civilian and military justice systems fully meet international standards. Most conflict-affected countries, however, lack the adequate national capacity and expertise to prevent, investigate and prosecute sexual violence.

In that regard, we greatly value the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in providing assistance to Governments by strengthening their capacity, including in the areas of criminal investigation and prosecution, military justice, legislative reform, the protection of victims and witnesses and reparations for survivors. We commend the partnership between the Justice Rapid Response initiative and UN-Women. The deployment of justice experts from their joint roster in 50 different missions greatly contributes to ending impunity for perpetrators.

Where action at a national level ais not yet possible, international justice mechanisms can play a critical role, including the International Criminal Court. The Security Council's targeted sanctions are another tool that could be more widely used to deter sexual violence in conflict and to seek accountability. Sexual and gender-based violence should be systematically applied as designation criteria when adopting or renewing targeted sanctions in situations of armed conflict. Moreover, the Council should be more vocal and systematic in its condemnation of conflict-related sexual violence and demands for credible investigations into all allegations of sexual violence committed in conflict zones — for Government-affiliated forces, armed groups or the United Nations own peacekeepers.

On the protection side, increased numbers of women peacekeepers, the deployment of women's protection and gender advisers, as well as human rights and gender-awareness training, have all proved to be successful and should be further expanded. At the national, regional and subregional levels, cooperation mechanisms should continue to actively promote effective responses to conflict-related sexual crimes, including through awareness campaigns, action plans and cooperation frameworks, capacity-building and shared good practices.

Care for and the protection of survivors of sexual violence is another vital issue to address. Overcoming trauma and restoring their dignity are crucial aspects in stopping the vicious cycle of stigmatization and further abuse. Victims must have access to justice, accountability and redress mechanisms in order to ensure their reintegration into their respective societies.

In conclusion, we have to acknowledge that violence in conflict is rooted in violence during times of peace. Gender inequalities, discriminatory cultural norms and patriarchal gender stereotypes often reinforce misogyny and crimes against women and girls. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all Member States to redouble their efforts to implement Sustainable Development Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls to become actors rather than victims in their societies, which will contribute to breaking the cycles of violence. Making a difference requires the full integration and mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the Council's — and the whole of the United Nations — work with coherent, consistent and credible actions at all levels.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Ruiz Cabañas (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank your Government, Sir, for its initiative to convene today's timely open debate to address one of the most important challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security — the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and by terrorist groups.

The unprecedented increase in sexual abuse and exploitation during armed conflict in recent years is indeed alarming. Mexico therefore echoes Secretary-General António Guterres' call to urgently address the issue and raise awareness about the situation of vulnerability in which millions of people live, in order to seek effective solutions to the phenomenon. Rape, sexual slavery, prostitution, pregnancy, abortion, enforced sterilization and forced marriages and other abominable practices that constitute sexual violence affect women, men, boys and girls at all levels and in

all circumstances. The upsurge in armed conflict and changes in tactics used by non-State actors, including terrorist groups, have exacerbated the incidence of sexual violence being committed. In spite of such challenges, Mexico would like to acknowledge some achievements that have been made.

With the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), we made the shift from an era of silence to one in which we recognized the gravity of the phenomenon and became aware of the urgent need to address it. Likewise, the adoption of resolution 1888 (2009) and subsequent resolutions has strengthened the regulatory framework that ensures effective accountability. Similarly, resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2331 (2016) acknowledged the existence of terrorist groups using sexual violence as a tactic to advance their goals. Despite that progress, however, much more remains to be done to ensure that the terrible stories about the use of sexual violence, with which we are all too familiar are not repeated. Mexico would like to make some proposals to strengthen the development of a comprehensive strategy to address, prevent and eradicate this type of violence.

First, in line with Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, above all, we must continue to promote the full participation of women in decision-making in all areas of public life, in order to achieve inclusive and equitable societies.

Secondly, we must promote the participation of women in designing strategies to combat sexual violence, as well as in peace processes, in order to foster national reconciliation based on respect and gender equity.

Thirdly, we must redesign national policy frameworks to ensure that victims of sexual violence in conflict situations are recognized as being legitimate and can achieve justice and comprehensive redress and the proper access to sexual and mental health services.

Fourthly, we must strengthen broad-based programmes that support victims of sexual violence, in line with the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General. To achieve those goals, we must also continue to draw the attention of the Security Council to the issue, and work to ensure that our actions are properly coordinated so as to avoid the duplication of resources.

Given the escalating violence confronting us, we need to take concrete actions to ensure full respect for human rights. For that reason, the prevention of armed conflicts and the search for sustainable peace should also be priority goals of the international community.

We call for a renewal of resolve of the membership of the Organization and for a commitment to mainstream the gender perspective as one of the core aspects of the work of the United Nations. I reiterate the commitment of my country to continuing to work with the international community to tackle this terrible scourge, which is so damaging to our societies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Elnour (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset of our statement, my delegation should like to express its appreciation to the presidency of Uruguay for organizing this open debate on sexual violence in conflict used as a tool of war and terror. I should also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, as well as to Mr. Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf, for their useful briefings to us this morning.

I should also like to express our sincere thanks to Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura for her efforts during her tenure in her post. Allow me to wish her, as well as her successor, Ms. Pramila Patten, every success. We remain prepared to cooperate with her Office.

My delegation condemns all forms of sexual violence against women or the use thereof as a tool of war or terror. The international community must join its efforts in order to confront this heinous crime and its root causes, and to prevent the trafficking in women and girls. As the Sudan is a transit country for this kind of crime, a law against human trafficking was drafted and adopted in 2014. In addition, a conference was held in my country on trafficking in Eastern Africa, at which the Khartoum declaration was issued and agreements were signed between the Sudan and a number of neighbouring countries to confront the groups that are violating human rights, particularly those of such vulnerable groups as women and children.

My delegation stresses that the Sudan is committed to making every possible effort to protect and promote women, particularly in areas of conflict. That commitment was demonstrated in a number of efforts that bore fruit in the adoption and implementation of a number of national strategies and plans. An independent commission on human rights was created, based on the Paris Principles and with particular attention given

to the situation of women in camps for internally displaced persons. That was done in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and the human rights division of the United Nations country team in the Sudan. Finally, in that vein, the Sudan has been committed to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

As stated in the report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General, many positive legislative and executive steps have taken place in the Sudan recently. They are clearly and strongly related to combating violence against women and to fighting sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. They aim it particular at promoting the rule of law and the administration of justice through important steps in the implementation of resolution 1888 (2009). Hence, the mandate and terms of reference of the Attorney-General have been fully separated from the Ministry of Justice to ensure complete independence, confirming the judicial role of the Attorney-General. Furthermore, last year the National Council amended the penal code in order to confer new powers on the Attorney-General. The Sudanese penal code directly and clearly condemns the crime of rape. Furthermore, there has been an addition to define the crime of sexual harassment. The Attorney-General of the Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur also now includes the crime of rape.

My delegation should also like to make the following clarifications before the Council concerning a number of paragraphs and statements in the Secretary-General's report to the Council that are related to the situation in Darfur.

First, my delegation emphasizes that information in paragraph 64 of the report does not reflect the current reality of Darfur. Furthermore, it is not in line with resolution 2340 (2017), of 8 February. We believe this to be a clear contradiction, particularly as Darfur has recently seen a considerable improvement in its security and political conditions, with the subsiding of the conflict. Resolution 2340 (2017) and previous reports of the Secretary-General, as well as the reports of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, have all stressed over the past three or four years that there has been considerable improvement in the security and political conditions in Darfur.

Secondly, paragraph 67 of the report reflects the figures provided by my Government on cases of sexual and gender violence reported during the year 2016 — a total of 112 cases. The court considered 40 cases and issued 13 sentences, including two death sentences for violators. Let me state that detailed analysis of these cases, particularly the age groups and relationships between perpetrators and victims, shows that the vast majority of those cases reflect social problems unconnected with conflict-related sexual violence. Perhaps more factual figures could have been provided had there been more extensive consultations with the Attorney-General in Darfur.

Thirdly, there are direct accusations in the report of the involvement of Sudanese Armed Forces and other regular forces in sexual crimes in the province of Darfur. Let me stress that all our forces are fully committed to implementing specific national instruments on the subject as well as fulfilling all international human rights rules and international humanitarian law. Since they were established in the last century, the Sudanese Armed Forces have been very professional. They have fulfilled their duties with respect to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), working to protect the Mission's members and equipment. In addition, numerous reports of the Secretary-General reports have borne witness to the fact that our forces have pursued and captured perpetrators of attacks against UNAMID.

The Government's armed forces, like those of all States in the world, are charged with fighting to restore the rule of law against armed groups acting under mere political slogans. In this regard, we need not delve into the perspective and practice of international law in relation to outlaw groups. However, reports of our Government forces' involvement of in the crimes we are considering here do not meet even the lowest level of evidentiary legitimacy.

The Government of the Sudan wishes to stress its eagerness to promote the rights of women and protect women from violence. In this context, we renew the expression of our wish to continue cooperating with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and all other bodies relevant to the issue. But once again, my delegation reiterates its call for more accuracy from the sources of information used in the Secretary-General's reports and for the sharing of such information with concerned States before it is included in a report.

My country believes that the treatment of this subject requires a careful comprehensive review of the

pillars of peacekeeping as it is an essential component of combating these heinous crimes. We also see a need for preventive diplomacy and for confronting the root causes of conflict. In most African conflicts, underdevelopment with all its economic, social and humanitarian consequences is often at the root of conflict. We also see a need to promote the role and status of women and to build capacity in States.

Each of us must make the intellectual effort required to confront the ideological root causes of sexual violence in conflict. We must intensify our efforts to combat terrorism and illegal migration because these phenomena are closely interconnected. Further, greater cooperation and coherence within the United Nations system is required to combat sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and to bring perpetrators to account for such heinous crimes. Moreover, victims must be compensated and assisted psychologically, physically, socially and financially so that they can be reintegrated into society, enjoy a livelihood and build their communities, societies and countries.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Mendoza-Garcia (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica wishes to thank the Uruguayan presidency and Vice-Chancellor Cancela for convening today's open debate on this relevant topic. We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the other speakers for their briefings.

It is important to reiterate that sexual violence is always unacceptable. However, its widespread use as a terrorist tactic and a weapon of war and terrorism remains of particular concern because it is one of the most cruel and terrifying forms of social coercion, especially when used as a strategy to control and intimidate entire communities and undermine the dignity and autonomy of people at their deepest levels. Equally alarming are the growing restrictions on the rights of women and girls being promoted by extremist groups, the control and restriction of these rights having become a fundamental element of conflict and the pretext for terrorist acts being specifically directed against women and girls.

Furthermore, sexual violence perpetuates conflict and weakens security and stability, hampering the ability of people to participate in the political, social and economic life of their societies. The United Nations, as an organization, and we, as the international community, have a great debt to pay on this issue, having failed to address the causes of violence and sexual abuse through preventive measures, on the one hand, and to eliminate impunity in these cases, on the other. As States, we have the primary responsibility of protecting our populations. As States, we must establish robust legal and institutional frameworks that lay firm foundations for preventing and addressing existing gaps in the protection of victims, especially women and girls. It is also extremely important to expand the scope of measures to protect the most vulnerable populations, such as ethnic and religious minorities, women in rural areas, women and girls associated with armed groups, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex population, and boys and men, who are also vulnerable to sexual violence — and whose prevalence is increasing.

We must use all measures at our disposal to get parties to conflicts, whether they be State or non-State actors, to comply with international law, urging States to punish all acts of sexual violence with the utmost vigour, including the referral of cases to the International Criminal Court, thereby eliminating impunity in such cases. We consider these acts of violence to be crimes against humanity and we will continue to advocate for zero tolerance for those who commit, order or condone sexual violence in conflict. We firmly believe that accountability and the use of existing international legal mechanisms to the greatest possible extent are vital tools for ensuring justice for victims. They also deter the future commission of crimes.

It is also crucial to implement Security Council resolutions, which outline commitments and strategies for preventing sexual violence in conflicts and provide for the monitoring of their implementation. Likewise, it is essential to work closely with the relevant sanctions committees to make sexual violence in the context of armed conflict and terrorism a criterion for being subject to sanctions. All those involved in the financing, planning, or supporting of armed groups with links to acts of sexual violence should qualify for inclusion within existing sanctions regimes. If this approach is to be effective, key actors must collaborate in the monitoring of these cases. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General also plays an important role in this regard, ensuring smooth communication and information exchange.

Prevention is key. Proper training on gender issues with a special focus on prevention and the systematic

inclusion of women's protection advisers in the strategic planning processes of political missions and peace operations are necessary. Adequate training on gender issues is also required to help prevent or, in the worst-case scenario, adequately respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and the trafficking in persons in conflict areas. If all this to work, programmes aimed at achieving these ends must be adequately funded.

It is extremely important to ensure that all these efforts are victim-centred. Sexual and reproductive health services should be made available to all. Similarly, support programmes must be set up to adequately reintegrate victims into their social structures, which will help restore the social fabric of populations affected by armed conflict and its consequences.

Legal frameworks must be established at the national level in order to protect victims — for example, through legislation that provides legal status to children born of rape and to combat the stigma associated with sexual abuse and violence — and to offer them reparations and compensation, keeping in mind that different forms of sexual violence call for different responses and solutions.

Finally, it is extremely important to involve women and girls in decision-making processes and in leadership positions, as it is to promote a gender perspective at all levels of participation. It is also key to ensure equal opportunity, access to education and the economic, political and social empowerment of women, with a view to enabling women and girls to assume a major, transformative role within their communities both during and post-conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): At the outset, let me thank you, Sir, for convening this debate. We welcome the fact that the Security Council is increasingly putting the elimination and prevention of conflict-related sexual violence at the heart of its agenda. The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249) clearly states that sexual violence is an unacceptable violation of human rights. Voices such as that of Ms. Mina Jaf remind us of the need for urgent action and zero tolerance by all of us.

Let me add our voice to the chorus of those who have thanked Ms. Zainab Bangura for her excellent work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Germany has worked closely with her and her Office to make a real difference in the lives of survivors of atrocities in Syria. We look forward to continuing that close partnership with her successor, Ms. Pramila Patten. I pledge Germany's unwavering support for her Office and mandate. I would like to add a few suggestions on how we can further improve the implementation of the sexual violence in conflict agenda, especially beyond New York.

First of all, we need to take a comprehensive approach to supporting the victims of sexual violence. Medical and psychological care, opportunities for economic participation and legal protection are some key aspects of such an approach. Germany supports, for instance, protective measures in the field of trafficking and smuggling. We have also received more than 1,000 women and children who suffered traumatic experiences in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and have given them access to medical care and trauma therapy.

Secondly, we need to change how women are perceived in society. Adequate role models and gender equality are indispensable in preventing and combating sexual violence against women. We are taking steps towards that goal, as outlined in our recently adopted national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Thirdly and equally important is redoubling our efforts to shift away from a culture of impunity. At the international level, the use of sanctions to list individuals for sexual violence or human rights violations against women, including through the use of specific listing criteria, is essential, as are efforts of international tribunals to open investigations and file charges related to sexual violence in conflict. Furthermore, in the case of Syria, we support — both politically and as a lead financial contributor — the creation of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, including crimes of sexual violence.

Fourthly and lastly, the shortcomings in the implementation of the strategic results framework on women and peace and security are not due a lack of words, but a lack of action. Those shortcomings must be addressed at different levels.

To accelerate the agenda's implementation, Germany is particularly engaged in supporting regional

efforts. For example, at the end of this month, the African Union will launch a network of African women leaders with the backing of UN-Women and Germany. That network aims to create a platform for politically active women across the continent to exchange their experiences and knowledge.

At the capital level, the recent meeting of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, organized by Spain, has been extremely valuable in generating further discussion on Member States' various national action plans. Germany is very pleased to host next year's meeting of the focal points in Berlin.

Let me conclude by pledging Germany's continued commitment to the protection of women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence. The implementation of the women, peace and security agenda is more pressing than ever and will remain one of our top priorities.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Lal (India): We thank the Uruguay presidency for organizing this open debate. We have carefully noted the issues raised in the concept note (S/2017/402, annex) and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249). We appreciate the useful remarks of the Deputy Secretary-General and the other briefers in that connection.

We also take this opportunity to welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of Ms. Pramila Patten as his Special Representative on Sexual Violence and Conflict, and assure her of our delegation's support in the carrying out of her tasks. We also commend the work of Ms. Zainab Bangura.

Despite the increased focus on the women and peace and security agenda, and the normative framework that has evolved during the last decade and a half, women and girls continue to be major victims despite being non-combatants. The heinous crimes against humanity perpetrated by terror networks such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in West Asia or Boko Haram in parts of West Africa or Al-Shabaab in East Africa, especially against women and girl children, are stark reminders of the serious challenges that need to be overcome by the international community.

We also agree that there is a need to increase and institutionalize the involvement of women in conflict prevention and resolution. That requires not only normative advice but capacity- and institution-building at the ground level. Therefore, the issue of women and peace and security cannot be understood in isolation from the wider societal context involving gender and development issues.

The Commission on the Status of Women and the work done by the Committee on the achievements of and obstacles encountered by States parties in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women continue to make significant progress in pushing the gender empowerment agenda that in itself has a transformative impact on societies — leading to more sustainable development and prosperity.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also highlights the importance of sustainable development for ensuring peace and security. India has been an active participant in the comprehensive deliberations on women-related issues at the various United Nations bodies. India has also been among the top contributors towards UN-Women since its inception five years back.

In the specific context of United Nations peacekeeping, India has been the lead troop contributor, with participation in nearly 50 of the 71 peacekeeping missions, and 13 of the current 16 missions. While there has been only a marginal increase in the overall number of women peacekeepers, almost a decade ago, in 2007, India deployed the first ever all-women formed police unit for peacekeeping with the United Nations Mission in Liberia. That unit served there until last year. The Liberian President underlined the contribution of the force in

> "inspiring Liberian women, imparting in them the spirit of professionalism and encouraging them to join operations that protect the nation".

The percentage of Liberian women in the country's security sector has increased threefold since 2007.

India has also taken the lead in hosting specialized training courses for peacekeepers on sexual violence in armed conflict situations. They have focused, among other issues, on the role of women in the context of post conflict situations. Last month India hosted the third such specialized course for female military officers, organized by the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in New Delhi in partnership with UN-Women. Over 40 women officers from nearly 30 countries attended the course. Such courses provide

the participants not only an opportunity to train to be ready for deployment but also to network and share experiences and best practices.

India was the first country to contribute to the Secretary-General's Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Prime Minister Modi has committed to a higher representation of Indian female peacekeepers in police units to United Nations peacekeeping missions. India is committed to fulfilling the pledge of having 15 per cent of military observers as women by the end of the year. India has also committed to providing another all-female formed police unit.

Prosecution is essential for prevention. The international community has an important role in helping to build adequate resources and capacities in that regard. In that context, India recently contributed to the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Special Court was among the landmark tribunals that tried and convicted persons for crimes that included the use of child soldiers and forced marriages.

India remains ready to contribute further internationally both to the normative and to the practical aspects of issues relating to women and peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

Mr. António: I would like to start by commending Uruguay for hosting this very important debate on sexual violence in conflict and to salute the presence, this morning, of the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay. I also wish to commend Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for underlining prevention as the ultimate key to tackling this scourge. Furthermore, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng for his very insightful briefing and to thank Ms. Mina Jaf for her briefing. I would also like to join my voice to those of others in congratulating Ms. Pramila Patten, of Mauritius, as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The commitment on the part of the Security Council to giving visibility to the challenges and opportunities faced by the women and peace and security agenda simply confirms our responsibility to include a greater gender-focused perspective to address and find long-term solutions to destructive armed conflict situations. I wish to praise the steps taken forward by the international community last December with the adoption of resolution 2331 (2016), which clearly enunciates the interrelationship between trafficking in persons in conflict situations and sexual violence against women, children, internally displaced persons and marginalized communities.

We are responding to a highly complex and dynamic environment in our quest to enhance the women and peace and security agenda and tackle sexual violence in conflict. There is no other solution than to rapidly address multiform patterns of conflict in the face of transnational actors who are constantly changing their modus operandi. At the continental level, the African Union (AU) continues to develop a resilient model of prevention, which includes subregional and international partners such as the United Nations, through a collaborative approach based on comparative advantage.

In that respect, the African Union has demonstrated relentless commitment and support for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and resolution 1612 (2005), on children and armed conflict. Although those two critical agendas have galvanized important momentum, we must acknowledge the fact that women and children continue to account for the majority of casualties in conflict situations. The public numbers of victims of sexual violence during armed conflict remain horrendous. The African Union has demonstrated the inflexibility of its position on the recruitment and abuse of women and children and sexual violence perpetrated against them by parties to armed conflict. We have a zero-tolerance position when it comes to sexual violence in conflict.

At the national level, several AU States members have demonstrated their commitment to preventing and deterring sexual violence in conflict — by adopting codes of conduct prohibiting sexual violence, through judicial investigations to hold perpetrators accountable and by training police services to better address sexual violence. While the number of women among the uniformed personnel of military and police forces remains limited, the AU leadership still holds the position that proactive steps should be taken by peacekeeping missions to increase the number of civilian positions held by women.

The African Union Commission remains at the forefront of the women and peace and security agenda.

The Chairperson early on recognized the valuable advances that we can achieve by including women in the practical and operational responses to peace and security threats. The AU has made the protection of women's and children's rights a continental priority, notably by designating, in 2014, Ms. Bineta Diop as the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, and by including the women and peace and security and children and armed conflict agendas in the African Peace and Security Architecture Roadmap 2016-2020.

The Chairperson placed a strong emphasis on conflict prevention during the AU-United Nations summit held in New York in April. By integrating the two agendas within the five strategic priorities of the African Peace and Security Architecture for the next three years, the AU has reaffirmed that gender, peace and security are essential elements of the overall African peace and security strategy.

To date, the African Peace and Security Architecture has striven to strengthen women's participation in peace, security and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa and to improve the quality of early-warning mechanisms and the effectiveness of the institutions responsible for addressing issues related to protecting women and children in conflict and post-conflict contexts. In that respect, the African Peace and Security Architecture Roadmap should be seen as a key contribution to mainstreaming gender issues into the African peace and security agenda. It concretely seeks to ensure women's and children's protection and the increased participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding strategies.

As we seek to enhance women's participation in prevention and mediation efforts, I have the pleasure, as already mentioned by the German delegation, to announce that the African Union Commission, in partnership with UN-Women and the Federal Republic of Germany, is organizing a high-level forum on women leaders for Africa's transformation, from 31 May to 2 June here in New York. The three-day forum will serve as a platform to launch the African Women Leaders Network, a new initiative aimed at bolstering women's leadership in governance, peace and security for the transformation of Africa. The initiative represents an important milestone in our shared path towards implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and the women and peace and security agenda in Africa.

The African Union Commission remains a key partner in prevention strategies that seek to address the scourge of sexual violence in conflict and to leave no one behind. We have developed specific legal instruments. However, it is clearly the time for all stakeholders to accelerate the practical implementation phase. We recognize the need to provide women with funding and capacity-building on peace and security issues and to strengthen initiatives and mechanisms to combat conflict-related sexual violence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased to see the interest generated by this open debate. However, I remind participants that 21 speakers remain on the list. I call for speakers' cooperation in limiting their statements to no more than four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Ellinger (Czech Republic): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for your timely initiative in organizing today's important debate.

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Let me also take this opportunity to declare our unfailing support for Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed's hard work and also congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her appointment as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and wish her all the best in all her future endeavours. We also thank Ms. Zainab Bangura for all her hard work in recent years.

The fact that all the stakeholders in this area take a firm position is of the utmost importance, especially now in an era when armed extremist groups place the subordination of women at the top of their agenda. Empowering girls and women, while maintaining a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual violence, is the only way to address inequality and violations of women's rights.

Even in times of peace, we should not forget that sexual violence must be adequately addressed. Czech law criminalizes such behaviour. In 2015, the Czech Republic adopted its action plan for the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence for the period 2015-2018. Its aim is to prevent domestic and gender-based violence and to increase the efficiency of the victim-support system. It addresses domestic violence, as well as sexual harassment, rape, stalking and other

forms of gender-based violence. The Czech action plan on women, peace and security, adopted in early 2017, sets out concrete tasks for combating sexual violence and other forms of violence against women and girls. We have also set up a framework for training sessions and programmes for military and civilian personnel in order to prevent this dangerous behaviour, together with the Ministry of Defence action plan on women, peace and security.

In the framework of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the Czech Republic has implemented a number of projects abroad, totalling CZK130 million in 2016, with a strong gender aspect, including projects aimed at preventing sexual violence and the abuse of women and girls. We have also set up health-care and hygiene centres for marginalized and abused girls and/or internally displaced persons. Those projects have been implemented in Georgia, Serbia, Kosovo, Syria, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan. In 2017, the Czech Republic started the implementation of a project aimed at combating sexual violence in Cuba.

Allow me to assure those present that the Czech Republic remains absolutely committed to strengthening the efforts of the relevant United Nations, regional and national bodies in their efforts to combat sexual violence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Uruguayan presidency for convening this debate and for providing us with an opportunity to participate.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

The fight against sexual violence is a priority for Belgium. We are about to adopt our third national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). The issue of sexual violence against women, including conflict-related violence, is of great importance. For Belgium, accountability is critical in the fight against impunity for crimes of sexual violence. Justice is a prerequisite for building peace and breaking the cycle of conflict. I would like to quickly highlight a few points.

First of all, we welcome the countries mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249) that have worked actively to establish a legislative framework and take effective measures. We commend the outstanding work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in supporting national efforts leading to tangible results — for example, in Guinea.

My delegation therefore wishes to highlight the importance of the Secretary-General's recommendation calling on the Security Council to fully include the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in the work of the sanctions committees. The undeniable legitimacy of the sanctions adopted in that context will indeed lead to strengthened collective efforts in the fight against the scourge.

As for sexual violence in Syria, we believe that the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism recently established by General Assembly resolution 71/248 also plays an important role. The Mechanism aims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes committed in Syria, including, of course, the issue of sexual violence addressed in this debate. In the same vein, allow me to welcome the work of the joint rapid response units and UN-Women and the firm impact of the personnel on the ground in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi as they seek to ensure justice and accountability.

In addition to the fight against impunity, reintegrating the victims of sexual violence is paramount. Those victims must not become victims a second time because of stigmatization by their families and communities. It is the perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence who should be ashamed, not the victims. It is therefore important to provide socioeconomic and psychosocial support for the victims.

In that regard, I would like to mention, as an example, the excellent work of Dr. Mukwege at Panzi Hospital in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a region where, unfortunately, sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war. Dr. Mukwege's hospital not only provides victims with access to medical care, it provides psychosocial support as well as lawyers to assist victims in obtaining legal redress. Unfortunately, the perpetrators of sexual violence respond with threats and acts of revenge, as demonstrated by the recent murder of a close collaborator of Dr. Mukwege. We therefore reiterate our call on the Congolese authorities and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to

take all the measures necessary to protect Dr. Mukwege, his team and his patients.

I cannot end without taking my turn in expressing our appreciation to Ms. Zainab Bangura, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and her team for their outstanding commitment. We welcome the appointment of her successor, Ms. Pramila Patten, and assure her of our full support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to join previous speakers in commending the President's initiative in convening today's important meeting.

Over the past 20 years, the international community has been proactively combating conflict-related sexual violence. The Security Council has achieved significant normative progress with the adoption of key resolutions, including resolution 2331 (2016). Moreover, since 2010, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has efficiently coordinated international endeavours on the part of various bodies. It is also noteworthy that women's protection advisors deployed to peacekeeping and political missions have proven to be helpful in enhancing the effectiveness of monitoring and early warning on the ground.

Despite this important progress, however, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) shows that deplorable sexual violence continues to occur in conflicts and post-conflict situations. Moreover, the rise of violent extremism, as well as mass migration and the ongoing refugee crisis, adds to the gravity and complexity of this problem. Taking all of this into consideration, I would like to highlight the following four points.

First, prevention must be prioritized. It is well known that extremist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab are among the most egregious perpetrators that weaponize sexual violence for strategic gain and ideological dissemination. Therefore, it is fair to say that the eradication of extremist groups should be the first task in preventing grave sexual violence in conflict. Furthermore, given that sexual violence and exploitation are used to sustain these groups via both recruitment and revenue, we must spare no effort to eradicate terrorism as mandated by the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In the long term, special attention should be drawn to the Global Citizenship Education initiative. Tolerance and mutual understanding of a range of differences and diversity, including ethnicity, religion and others, can be a fundamental solution to preventing violent extremism at its roots. The prevention of sexual violence in conflict is also in line with the priority that the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has placed on the role of women and youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. As the Chair of the PBC this year, I will make efforts to ensure that this issue be duly reflected in the PBC's work on women and youth.

Secondly, we need to end the culture of impunity. We often witness a lack of willingness and capacity of individual countries to hold perpetrators accountable. In this regard, I would like to commend the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for its efforts to strengthen institutional safeguards against impunity at the national level. This is especially important as a lack of safeguards within national borders can often snowball into transnational issues in our deeply interconnected world. A case in point is the increased sexual violence and systematic trafficking in persons along migration and arms routes in the Mediterranean. In addition, when a particular country fails to hold perpetrators accountable, the international community should employ all available means to address sexual violence in conflict, including referrals to the International Criminal Court, as recommended in the aforementioned report of the Secretary-General.

Thirdly, we have to stick to a survivor-centric approach towards victims. Priority should be given to helping the socioeconomic reintegration of victims by providing them with sustainable assistance, including medical, psychological, legal and other multisectoral services. And we also need to scale up attention paid to the risk of survivors being twice traumatized. If survivors are not fully accepted and reintegrated into communities and, instead suffer stigma, shame and suspicion, they have a much higher chance of being further marginalized or even susceptible to radicalization efforts.

Fourthly, we need to enhance the capacity of Governments to respond to sexual violence in conflict. Given that fragile and conflict-affected States often

lack the capacity to address this crime, they need to be supported by the international community to build their own national capacities.

The Republic of Korea, for its part, has continued to take concrete initiatives to contribute to building the capacities of Governments, as well as of women and girls, in fragile and conflict-affected States. In particular, we have carried out official development assistance projects aimed at supporting the empowerment of women and gender equality. In 2015, we launched the Better Life for Girls initiative, which employs a gender-focused approach to empower girls in developing countries. We have also continuously supported gender-sensitive peacebuilding projects of various international organizations, such as UN-Women's Building Back Better project and the work of the United Nations Development Programme on gender and human rights.

Before closing, I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Korea is committed to working closely with the international community in order to eradicate sexual violence in conflict around the globe.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I would like, first of all, to congratulate the Uruguayan presidency of the Security Council on having taken the initiative to organize this open debate on an issue that, regrettably, has become recurrent and topical, namely, sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the high quality of his report (S/2017/249), in which he makes some very relevant recommendations, after having provided a clear picture of the state of sexual violence, in particular in the context of displacement caused by conflict, the rise of violent extremism and terrorism, the trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and the use of women and girls as a tactic of war.

Tunisia is participating in this open debate in order to recall the particular interest it attaches to this issue and to renew once again its commitment to the need to protect vulnerable populations, to promote their rights, to raise awareness on the danger of the use of sexual violence in times of conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism and to reiterate its firm conviction that women are and will remain indispensable and active partners in any process of prevention, mediation and conflict resolution.

It is no coincidence that the Tunisian national strategy to combat extremism and terrorism, adopted in November 2016, which is based on four fundamental lines, namely, prevention, protection, follow-up and response, gives women a central role in the prevention of extremism, but also protects them as a vulnerable target who can be intimidated and subjected to violence. A review workshop was organized, on 3 May in Tunisia, at the initiative of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to discuss the various forms of polarization of women by terrorist groups, the need to protect women from indoctrination and harassment and their key role in preventing and combating terrorism.

The Security Council, in its resolutions adopted since 2008, including resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013), has judiciously considered sexual violence to be a tactic of war and an obstacle to maintaining and restoring of international peace and security, by exposing the most vulnerable, especially women and children, to the worst forms of abuse, hence the importance of our meetings today and tomorrow. There must be widespread and comprehensive mobilization.

Tunisia, in 2013, through the adoption of the Organic Law on Establishing and Organizing Transitional Justice, has made uncovering the truth and putting an end to impunity one of its main objectives in order to evoke, recognize and condemn all forms of violence and attacks against the most vulnerable populations. In that conneciton, the Truth and Dignity body, which was organized for that purpose, organized a public hearing devoted exclusively to women on 10 March 2017. This was a first, which broke the taboos and went beyond social and societal constraints and requirements.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my country's readiness to pursue these efforts and initiatives in order to combat all forms of sexual violence against women.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Ms. Kadare (Albania): I would like to thank the Uruguayan presidency for convening this open debate to raise awareness of the acute issue of conflict-related sexual violence. I also wish to thank the briefers for their informative and powerful interventions, and

most particularly Ms. Mina Jaf for sharing with us the perspective of civil society.

Albania aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, and I wish to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Over the past decade, the Security Council has amply identified the scourge of sexual violence in conflict as a devastating tactic of war and terrorism and has recognized it as an issue that affects international peace and security. Today we have a better understanding of the scope and roots of the problem than ever before. In terms of international legal and normative instruments, we have the tools required to take significant action, including seven Security Council resolutions.

In September 2013, 144 countries, including Albania, co-signed the historic Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, thus marking an unprecedented level of momentum and political will.

Yet the shocking and unacceptable reality is that despite our collective efforts and despite international awareness and outrage, conflict-related sexual violence continues unabated and largely unpunished. The real challenge facing us is how to convert our political will into action on the ground; how to implement our objectives in real conflicts, thus effecting change in the lives of millions of vulnerable children, men and women. The challenges to effectively combating this crime are multiple: lack of accountability for the perpetrators, weak Government response, insufficient reporting of the facts, poor monitoring and inadequate support services for the victims, who also have to face the shame, the stigma and the risk of retaliation.

In addition, the lack of adequate national capacity and expertise necessary to prevent, investigate and prosecute perpetrators remains among the main impediments in combating sexual violence. It is critical that the United Nations increase its efforts to strengthen national capacities. In this context, I would like to join other colleagues and express Albania's support for the excellent work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as the partnership between Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women for their endeavours to end impunity for perpetrators.

Albania welcomes the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) and its comprehensive analysis of current trends as well as emerging concerns. Most importantly, we support the implementation of its action-oriented recommendations. We pay tribute to the relentless work of the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, and would like to congratulate Ms. Patten on her new appointment in this important mandate.

But while the United Nations has a crucial role to play, it is commitment and action by the parties to a conflict that are the key to changing the situation on the ground. Every Government has a responsibility to adopt protective measures, develop investigation mechanisms and put in place policies that protect its people from sexual violence, whether perpetrated by the Government's own forces or by terrorists, in times of conflict or peace. When States fail to comply, the International Criminal Court, whose jurisdiction is universal, can and must fulfil its role in ensuring accountability.

In closing, I would like to stress that Albania believes that there should be zero tolerance for any form of sexual violence, in all circumstances and at all times. We member States should unite in our efforts to eradicate this horrendous crime through a comprehensive and integrated approach that entails prevention, early warning, justice, accountability, and assistance and reparations for survivors.

Today we in this Chamber stand in solidarity with the anonymous and forgotten victims of sexual violence, whose rights and dignity matter.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I wish to thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here at this late hour. It is great to see you back in New York, and we commend and admire the work of Uruguay on the Council, which is a great inspiration to future elected members. We warmly thank you for all the work that your team here is doing.

We thank Uruguay for having organized this debate, and we welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249). Let me take this opportunity to thank Ms. Bangura for her excellent work in past years and to say that we look forward to working with Ms. Patten in the coming period.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union and with that made by

the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Let me also underline the points made by my Italian colleague, in the light of the split term on the Security Council between our two countries, Italy this year and the Netherlands in 2018.

I will focus on three issues: first, identifying the problem; secondly, ending impunity; and, thirdly, taking action.

As concerns identifying the problem, the report of the Secretary-General rightly draws our attention to the disturbing trend of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism. Violent extremism is on the rise. Perpetrators often do not react to political pressure or abide by agreements, treaties or international law. The use of rape as an instrument of war and terror constitutes one of the most horrendous human rights violations in the world. The problem is clear, so we need to do more.

That brings me to my second point: ending impunity. Reporting of cases is complicated and can carry high social costs. Shame, stigma and strong cultural norms can dissuade women and men from reporting crimes. The Council therefore needs to act. The listing of the individuals and groups that commit such acts of violence is one of the means to address these violations, and the Council has a responsibility there.

But we also need to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted. We have to close the impunity gap, and this applies also to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. The Kingdom of the Netherlands therefore strongly supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance approach to this issue.

When it comes to ending impunity, we feel very strongly that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has a role to play as a court of last resort. Its mandate allows for prosecuting individuals suspected of sexual violence. We believe that the ICC must continue to strengthen the policies that ensure accountability under international criminal law.

This brings me to my third point. We need to take action. Let me share some Dutch examples here. All Dutch police and military personnel receive pre-deployment training, and, together with our valued partner Spain, whose representative spoke earlier today, we provide training to other professionals from other States. Additionally, we financed a specialized training programme for female military officers with UN-Women, and we also made possible a global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

But we also need to shift our conceptual paradigm. We must empower women and involve them as leaders in conflict resolution and in peace negotiations. We should not only see them as victims but see and treat them as leaders, and empower them accordingly.

In conclusion, identifying the problem, ending impunity and strengthening action to deal with sexual violence in conflict is important, and it is the clear task of the Council to support such efforts. Together we must put an end to conflict-related sexual violence. Together we must end sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism, and, working together, the Council should act accordingly. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to be a partner in that endeavour this year and certainly also in 2018.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are pleased at Uruguay's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

We have taken note of the report of the Secretary-General under consideration (S/2017/249), which contains information submitted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

While it is true that we support every effort to put an end to all forms of sexual violence in armed conflict and to bring the perpetrators and instigators to account, we believe that at the same time, we should be very cautious and objective in considering this very dangerous humanitarian issue, which has reached alarming levels in several parts of the world. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General indicated in her report that it was based on the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. I should reiterate that my country has rejected the work and reports of the Commission since its establishment. Its work has been exceedingly politicized and totally unprofessional. We are therefore concerned about the fact that the Special Representative is basing her points on reports and information from a body that has no credibility or humane principles. She should rather be basing her conclusions on investigations conducted by her own office.

In her secret report submitted to the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, the Special Representative gave long, detailed descriptions of the flagrant acts of sexual violence committed by Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and their affiliates against Syrian and Iraqi women. In her current report, however, she says that none of those groups have committed flagrant crimes against Syrian women, whether of abduction, rape, violence, torture and the separation of mothers from their children. She confines herself to timid mentions of their restrictions on women's access to work and education. She has gone far outside her remit — identifying acts of sexual violence in conflict. In fact, in some of the paragraphs of the report she mentions Syrian women's participation in political life. This leads one to ask why — if the Office of the Special Representative is unable to conduct investigations into sexual violence perpetrated by armed terrorist groups against Syrian women on Syrian territory, which do fall under her mandate — she is going beyond that mandate to discuss other topics, which increase her workload. She is also promoting the non-consensual resolution 71/248, which also goes beyond her remit.

Syrians in areas controlled by terrorist armed groups are targets for the worst kinds of sexual violence and slavery. Women and girls have been abducted and forced into marriage with terrorists, including foreigners. That is why we once again urge the Office of the Special Representative to shine a light on the fate of hundreds of women and girls who have been abducted by elements of the terrorist group Jaysh Al-Islam to Adha in the suburbs of Damascus and exhibited in iron cages in Douma. We also call on the Special Representative to support the Syrian Government in seeing justice done for the women who have been abducted, enslaved or killed in Latakia, in the north, and those who have been killed in cold blood in Zara and Hama. All those crimes have been reported to the Office of the Special Representative and the Security Council, and we therefore call for more support in investigating what happened to these victims of takfiri terrorism.

The report ignores the suffering of the Syrian women and girls living in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, despite the fact that their situation has always been an issue discussed in the previous reports, since it involves violations that have been documented in United Nations resolutions and internationally. We had hoped that the report would mention the flagrant violations that Syrian women in camps in Jordan and Turkey have suffered, particularly the systematic rapes committed by Da'esh bandits who shelter behind a façade of legitimacy.

All of this indicates structural gaps. The Government of Syria has already officially submitted and documented all of its structural gaps to the Office of the Special Representative, who has regrettably ignored all its requests. We do not know why, but we hope that she will submit concrete proposals aimed at ending sexual violence against women and using her influence with the countries sponsoring armed terrorists, all of which we are familiar with, to put an end to the terrible crimes committed by these terrorist groups. We do not expect her to submit secret reports to the 1267 Committee that only expand her mandate in a way that interferes with countries' internal affairs. We are ready to cooperate with the Office of the Special Representative and to be informed of every name and incident that she has received in order to open investigations and punish the perpetrators of any crimes in a framework of cooperation and dialogue, so that she can fulfil her worthy mandate as effectively as possible.

The people responsible for violence directed against Syrian women and girls in Syria, Jordan and Turkey come from the same countries that announce in Security Council meetings that they want to do everything to protect Syrians while giving money, aid and support to terrorist groups and foreign terrorists who come to Syria in order to commit the worst possible acts of violence against Syrians.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the Uruguayan presidency of the Security Council for convening today's open debate on sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism, which is indeed a most pressing issue. I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their very comprehensive presentations this morning.

Portugal aligns itself with the statement earlier delivered earlier by the observer of the European

Union, and I would like to add some comments in my national capacity.

We welcome the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/249), which has given us very important information on the implementation of the Council's resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence and its substantial recommendations for dealing with that scourge. Almost 17 years ago, the Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, but despite all our efforts and achievements so far, I think we all agree that much remains to be done. Portugal considers it to be extremely important to ensure that the Security Council continues to address concerns relating to the agenda on women and peace and security, which is a critical yet under-utilized tool for preventing conflict and shaping more effective responses to today's complex crises.

As discussed in the Secretary-General's report, in 2016 sexual violence, including widespread incidents of rape, continued to be employed as a tactic of war. That is intolerable. The report also illustrates the nexus that exists between trafficking in persons and conflict-related sexual violence, which is especially worrying where it relates to the cases of women and girls who have been ostracized after being released from violent extremist groups and have subsequently fallen victims to sex trafficking.

Portugal fully agrees with the view of the Secretary-General that more must be done to prevent sexual violence in conflict. Moreover, we need to ensure the following: victims of violence, including sexual violence, should be able to effectively enjoy the right to protection and reparation; the perpetrators should be punished; and support for community-mobilization campaigns should be designed to help shift the stigma of sexual violence from the victims to the perpetrators. We would like once again to encourage States and international organizations to develop action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and to include therein measures to address specifically sexual violence in conflict.

Portugal adopted its first national action plan in 2009. A second one, currently in force, was adopted in 2014. It includes several measures addressing the scourge of sexual violence in conflict, notably training programmes on gender equality and violence against women and young women, including sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings, for executive and technical staff in the justice sector and for members of the armed forces and the security forces; and the same programmes are also in place for judicial personnel and members of the armed forces and security forces assigned to international missions for the promotion and maintenance of peace and security.

We must also to take into account the essential role played by civil-society organizations, which often complement the work done by military, security and civilian personnel in conflict and post-conflict settings and in emergency situations. They often play a crucial role in preventing and reporting crimes and in alerting the international community to such crimes, in restoring the internal order of the States and may also be crucial in supporting the reconstruction of countries and helping the population. Working in close collaboration with those organizations is therefore indispensable, in our view, to enhance the results we are seeking to achieve.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the attention of the Council to the potential of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which supports the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). It is a most relevant initiative by Spain, which Portugal fully supports. Portugal is also a proud member of that group.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Gone (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. As we did in the case of your previous mandate, we express our full confidence that you, Sir, will steer the work of the Council effectively.

My country is very pleased to take part in this open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. It is high time for us to exchange views again on this important issue. My delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249). I also thank the briefers for their outstanding presentations this morning.

The Secretary-General's report indicates that conflict-related sexual violence continued in 2016, as in the past. Often such violence was strategic in nature with specific objectives and chosen targets. Worse still, new phenomena, such as the rise of violent extremism, have further complicated the picture which was already alarming. This violence, which has disastrous

consequences for the victims, their families and communities, is unacceptable. It is a serious violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The international community, and in particular the Security Council as the guarantor of world peace and security, must vigorously combat this type of violence and ensure that perpetrators are brought before the competent courts to answer for their actions. In that regard, my country particularly welcomes the adoption of resolution 2331 (2016) and fully endorses the zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary-General on the sexual exploitation and abuse committed by Blue Helmets, and the specific measures taken in those cases.

My country has emerged from almost a decade of crisis. Unfortunately, during that time there were reported cases of sexual violence, mostly individual and collective rape. Those cases are indeed touched upon in the report in question. However, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, in its determination to tackle this phenomenon, has, in addition to existing legal mechanisms, implemented a national strategy to combat gender-based violence. Thus, of 478 cases of sexual violence documented and perpetrated by the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire and non-State actors in 2011 in the wake of the post-electoral crisis, we have moved to just one case of attempted rape in 2016. The perpetrator was brought before the Military Court.

Given the praiseworthy progress made, the Secretary-General has just removed Côte d'Ivoire from the list of countries where law-enforcement agencies and armed groups have systematically committed rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire would like to express its full appreciation to the United Nations for that decision, and at the same time we would like to call for the removal of the non-State actors from the list, as those groups, while still included in the Secretary-General's report, have not been in existence for six years. That result is the outcome of the successful cooperation between the Ivorian Government and its security and defence forces and the United Nations. Here, I would like to pay tribute to the high quality of the work carried out by the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and her team.

In order to meet the challenges involved the Government of Côte d'Ivoire undertook actions at several levels. Regarding the strengthening of the regulatory framework, the initiatives undertaken since the 2011 crisis led to the establishment of a National Committee to Combat Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and the establishment of a mechanism for the suppression of rape. Along those lines, the Chief of the Defence Staff signed a Declaration of Commitment at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in London on 19 June 2014. In June 2015 and in July 2016 that led to the signing of commitments by 47 commanders of the armed forces and, later, by 35 commanders of gendarmerie units. That involved training their personnel on the issue of sexual violence and combating that scourge.

Currently, instruction on sexual violence in both peace and conflict forms an integral part of the training modules for training offices and military academies. Over the past three years the Government has also organized numerous workshops for the defence and security forces so as to ensure that ownership decisions are taken at the highest levels.

In terms of cooperation with the United Nations, my Government welcomes the establishment in 2015 of the Joint Mechanism between the Ivorian Armed Forces and the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire to monitor violations of human rights. We would like to express our total appreciation of the important role played by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. The team assisted my country with technical assistance in developing and implementing an action plan for the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire. In particular, that involved setting up special police units and strengthening training for the national gendarmerie.

As a troop-contributing country, Côte d'Ivoire intends to continue along the same lines, building the capacity for its defence and security forces to combat sexual violence. My country is also determined to successfully conclude the legal proceedings regarding recorded cases and to support victims, in particular through actions taken by the Ministry of Women, Child Protection and Solidarity.

In conclusion, I should like to point out that my delegation endorses most of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence. Nonetheless, it would like to emphasize the following points.

First, Member States must bring their national legislation in line with international standards with

respect to the qualification, prevention and punishment of sexual violence. Secondly, it is important to integrate the issue of sexual violence into peacekeeping operations. Thirdly, priority must be given to capacity-building in areas related to sexual violence before contingents are deployed. Fourthly, human rights, international criminal law and international humanitarian law must be taught during the initial training of national security and defence forces. Fifthly, human rights concepts must be included in secondary school curricula and professional training courses. Finally, my delegation would like to highlight the relevance of the ever-increasing number of female personnel in national defence and security systems and peacekeeping contingents.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Ramirez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to welcome Mr. José Luis Cancela, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay. We are delighted to have you, Sir, presiding over today's important debate. We therefore thank Uruguay, a sister country, for convening today's debate, and congratulate the entire delegation, in particular Ambassador Rosselli, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council during the month of May. We believe that it will be successful month for the country and for the Council.

At the same time, we would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for being here today and for her briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-related Sexual Violence (S/2017/249). We are also grateful for the briefings by the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, and the Executive Director of Women's Refuge Route, Ms. Jaf.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would like to reiterate its most categorical condemnation of sexual violence in armed conflicts as a crime that violates human dignity and is a violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The report being discussed today highlights the ongoing rise in the number of atrocities and crimes of sexual violence, which are committed in times of armed conflict and are part and parcel of systematic action taken by extremist and terrorist groups.

Venezuela has repeatedly stated in all forums of the Organization that one of the causes of this situation has been that non-State armed groups are being trained, supplied and supported in an effort to destabilize and break up States, forcing the collapse of their institutions and providing a breeding ground for impunity and the commission of such atrocities. Worsening extremism and religious and ethnic intolerance as a strategy to destabilize countries causes women and children to become victims of sexual violence, which is employed as a form of punishment or punitive action against minorities.

If the ban on providing arms and financial support to extremist and terrorist groups were fully respected under international law, there would be a decrease in both the operational capacity of non-State actors and terrorists and in the incidences of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. We firmly believe that accountability is also key to preventing such crimes. We cannot give way to impunity in crimes of this kind. Venezuela advocates effective accountability for all forms of sexual violence and the use of exemplary sanctions on all instigators and perpetrators of such crimes.

Venezuela also reiterates its support for the Organization's zero-tolerance policy and demands accountability for all crimes of violence and sexual abuse committed by any foreign force and by military, police or civilian personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as by staff of the Organization not deployed in such operations. In that regard, the United Nations is still expected to respond to the victims of such crimes.

On another note, we believe that building capacity in national institutions related to justice, health and social welfare systems in countries in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict plays a fundamental role. It is therefore necessary to pool our efforts so that, while fully respecting the sovereignty of the States concerned, such capacity can be developed and strengthened to allow for adequate and timely treatement and accountability, as well as the rehabilitation of victims and children who are products of that violence. We call for guarantees and respect for the right to an identity, which includes, among others, the right to a nationality, which is a fundamental right of every human being and is also key to being able to enjoy other fundamental rights.

We would therefore like to acknowledge the important work being done by the Expert Team on the

Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in support of the national authorities of countries aimed at building institutional and technical capacity to address this issue. We hope that such an important group will not be subject to budget cuts. The theme of sexual violence must be addressed within the context of peace processes and ceasefires, as well as in all demobilization and reintegration processes in which the United Nations participates. Mediators and special envoys involved in such processes must have the requisite training in order to respond appropriately to the issue as it emerges in various specific contexts. In addition, efforts must be pursued to improve the preparedness of all field staff and to increase the number of gender experts and women's protection advisers in the various missions.

In conclusion, Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to helping to strengthen the institutional administrative and legal mechanisms tasked with combating this type of crime, which violates the dignity of human beings.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): I would like to thank you, Sir, for chairing today's debate on a topic that is difficult but nevertheless important to raise in the Council. I would also like to congratulate you assuming the Council presidency for the month of May and assure you of our support for a successful presidency.

I thank the Deputy Secretary-General, the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the representative of Women's Refugee Route for their statements.

Sexual violence on its own is clearly a great moral issue and is surely devastating to the victims. When used as a tactic in conflict, the demoralizing effect it has on the population is sure to exacerbate and deepen tensions. There are long-term effects that we still need to understand. However, a society thrives with individuals who are healthy in mind and body, which is one of the cornerstones of sustainable peace. For that reason, Indonesia is deeply concerned about the use of conflict-related sexual violence as a war tactic. Women and children are especially vulnerable. The international community must continue to condemn such atrocious acts requiring greater efforts to get to the root of the problem.

Indonesia applauds the efforts of the United Nations, other multilateral organizations and civil society to halt this human tragedy. The international community must remain resolute and firmly committed to upholding the principle of protecting human dignity and limiting the effects of conflict on non-combatants.

The United Nations normative framework on deterring atrocities against humankind in situations of conflict should continue to be strengthened as necessary. Four elements should be included in efforts to end the culture of impunity for sexual violence in wars: prevention, early detection, protection and punishment for perpetrators, and justice for the victims.

Indonesia has taken an active role in United Nations peacebuilding efforts and is committed to strengthening its role in the United Nations peacekeeping operations. At the moment, Indonesia has female personnel in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, and we are committed to increase the number of peacekeeping troops, including the number of Indonesian female peacekeepers and women military observers.

Mandatory training on addressing sexual violence for all peacekeeping personnel should be continued and supported. The Indonesia National Defence Forces Peacekeeping Centre has included training on this particular issue and will ensure the continuation as well as the strengthening of this exercise.

Allow me to end by stressing that we should not overlook civilian expertise. The pool of civilian capacities can be broadened and deepened for peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict. One way is to involve women survivors. They should be encouraged to participate in peacekeeping operations training so that troops on the ground are aware and more in tune with the signs of sexual violence and exploitation. It should also include countries with relevant experience in post-conflict peacebuilding or democratic transition.

The protection of women in armed conflict should be further strengthened; that much is clear. Ultimately, our aim should be the prevention of armed conflict itself. Here, the Security Council, in cooperation with regional organizations, should play its role in promoting the prevention of conflict and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ghana.

Mrs. Pobee (Ghana): Mr. President, at the outset, let me express my delegation's appreciation to you and to the Uruguayan presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate on the subject of women and peace and security, focusing on sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism.

We thank the Secretary-General for his very comprehensive report (S/2017/249) and are grateful for the briefings provided by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, Mr. Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf.

We welcome the extensive work done within the United Nations system in international standard-setting on conflict-related sexual violence and applaud the Security Council for its ground-breaking resolutions that have helped to prioritize this issue. Much, however, remains to be accomplished in real terms in the areas of prevention, accountability, prosecution of actual cases and in addressing the needs of victims.

My delegation is pleased to note that focus is now shifting from norm-setting to the implementation of existing legal instruments to combat sexual violence in conflict. We recognize the fact that Member States have the primary responsibility for the protection of their peoples for mass atrocities, including sexual violence and, consequently, there is a need to strengthen national capacities to hold perpetrators accountable, to deliver justice to victims, and to deter future crimes through relevant legislative and institutional arrangements.

Since long-held cultural perceptions and beliefs require more than legislation, national laws must be backed by multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks at the community level with the active participation of traditional and religious leaders. The social acceptability of sexual violence in conflict must not be allowed to gain ground, normalized or reinforced. We therefore share the view that sexual violence in conflict does not arise solely out of the conditions of war, but is directly linked to the culture of violence and discrimination against women that already exists in any given society, and that this must be tackled holistically.

One of the critical gaps in addressing sexual violence in conflict and in post-conflict situations is the lack of capacity of peace enforcement officers. Training in gender sensitivity, the prevention of sexual exploitation and addressing conflict-related sexual violence should be mandatory components of national, military and police training, as well as of the predeployment training of all United Nations peacekeeping and civilian personnel.

In situations where peacekeepers themselves are involved in crimes, they should be made to face the full rigours of the law to serve as a deterrent. My delegation wishes to reiterate the importance of adopting survivor-centric approaches towards victims as a means of addressing difficulties in reintegration and social stigma related to their abuse. Adequate funding must be allocated to specific and targeted programmes, including appropriate medical and psychosocial support, education about legal rights and economic reintegration for victims. Special efforts must be made to incorporate victims into justice processes and to create space for them to be effectively heard. In that regard, national judicial processes must seek to eliminate complicated or degrading reporting procedures and promptly and thoroughly investigate reported cases as a further means of reducing impunity.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to commend Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for the strides that have been made. We trust that the incoming Special Representative will continue to lead in these efforts. We urge the Council to approve additional resources to be allocated to the important work they are doing.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Zaayman (South Africa): I congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Uruguayan delegation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May and for organizing this open debate on the very important issue of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism.

My delegation wishes to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her statement, and Mr. Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their briefings. We also welcome the report the Secretary-General (S/2017/249).

In war and conflict, women and children continue to be the victims of deliberate attacks, including terrorist acts, and indiscriminate and excessive violence. These acts of violence, when carried out in a systematic and widespread manner and as part of an attack against innocent populations, stress an armed conflict and

become an enormous obstacle to its resolution and to building peace.

Sexual abuse and discrimination are directly linked to gender inequality, poverty, exclusion and marginalization. Sexual violence is a deliberate and intolerable violation of the victim's human rights. When women and girls are preyed upon, abused and raped, the international community has a responsibility to speak out on their behalf and to act as their advocates and guardians.

Over the years the international community has come to a deeper understanding of the unique impact that armed conflict has on women and children. There is an agreement that the participation of women is essential to ensuring conflict resolution, inclusive reconciliation, peacebuilding and sustainable peace. In that regard, resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent resolutions provide the basis for a more focused and systemic response to the role of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. The Security Council has also adopted a number of resolutions dealing with sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism, including resolution 2106 (2013), which calls for those found to have committed acts of sexual violence to be held accountable to the fullest extent. Despite these laudable efforts, these atrocities continue unabated. Our discussions and debates, such as this one today, must result in continued meaningful action to protect the victims of such abuses.

We underscore the need to make full use of the instruments and tools created by the Security Council, including all of these resolutions, and wish to emphasize the following points.

First, South Africa believes that a crucial aspect of ensuring that women are safeguarded from becoming victims of sexual violence and abuse is to increase the number of women peacekeepers deployed in peacekeeping missions. That would provide for a safer environment for women to report instances of sexual violence and abuse, as well as their concerns and overall perspectives about the security situation. It is against that background that South Africa continues to deploy more women peacekeepers in United Nations peacekeeping missions and urges other Member States to do the same. The contribution of women to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts is recognized as a contributing factor to the effectiveness and long-term success of United Nations deployments.

Secondly, South Africa strongly supports the Secretary-General's initiatives in deploying women's protection advisers in United Nations missions. As the Secretary-General has recommended, the Security Council should ensure the accelerated deployment and provision of adequate funding for such advisers. That would facilitate the implementation of the resolutions on sexual violence in conflict, including the new monitoring requirements set forth in resolution 2331 (2016). Crucially, Member States should support the inclusion of such posts in the mandates and budgets of peacekeeping operations.

Thirdly, we support the Secretary-General's recommendations that call for a mandatory component of predeployment training for all peacekeeping personnel on gender sensitivity, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and addressing conflict-related sexual violence. That should also include better identification and response to indicators of trafficking in persons in areas affected by conflict, in line with resolution 2331 (2016). In that regard, South Africa established standby investigative teams with the capacity to deploy to a mission within 72 hours.

Fourthly, we also support the Secretary-General's call on the Security Council to give due consideration to the risk factors and early-warning signs of sexual violence in its monitoring of conflict situations, especially in relation to periods of rising violent extremism, political instability, elections, civil strife and mass population movements. In that regard, the Security Council is also urged to work with the Secretary-General towards the development of a protocol for preventing sexual abuse as part of peacekeeping mandates, and for the General Assembly to include it in the budgets for high-risk peacekeeping operations.

Fifthly, we call on the United Nations to intensify efforts to fight this scourge by enhancing prevention and swift responses to these crimes. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, that would also include dedicated and additional human and financial resources. South Africa therefore supports the proposal of the Secretary-General for the establishment of victims-assistance-support functions at United Nations Headquarters.

Sixthly, we also believe that efforts to fight sexual violence in conflict need to take into account measures to ensure adequate information, fact-finding and proper documentation. Raising awareness of women's and girls'

rights and of the existence of sexual violence against men and boys are equally important. In that regard, we support the proposals of the Secretary-General for the establishment of a system-wide consolidated repository of case information.

In conclusion, the international community must continue to work towards a non-discriminatory and non-sexist global society in which all women and girls are treated as equal citizens. The end of discrimination against women will go a long way towards addressing the root causes of sexual violence.

Finally, let us recognize that there cannot be peace without justice. Demanding accountability from all parties to a conflict, together with the fight against impunity, remains our prime responsibility. Let me end with a quotation from President Mandela delivered in 1997 at the National Men's March against Sexual Abuse:

> "As long as we take the view that these are problems for women alone to solve, we cannot expect to reverse the high incidence of rape and child abuse ... We will not defeat this scourge that affects each and every one of us".

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Roet (Israel): I wish to thank today's briefers — Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Under-Secretary-General Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf — for their remarks. I would also like to give a special thanks to former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her outstanding work over the past five years, and to congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. She can always count on Israel's full support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Uruguayan delegation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May, and to acknowledge you, Mr. President, for your presence and commitment throughout the day, which shows exactly how committed Uruguay is to this issue. For that I offer my thanks.

Israel aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and would like to add the following in its national capacity.

It is unimaginable — it makes one's blood boil — to realize that in 2017 it is still necessary to gather to debate the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. Sexual violence is an atrocious crime of humanity against humanity and a plague that must be eradicated. If a nation refuses to prosecute domestic violence, marital rape or honour killings in times of peace, then there is little hope for justice in times of war and conflict.

I look around the world today and see an epidemic of sexual violence. The number of victims is so overwhelming that we often lose sight of the individuals whose lives have been destroyed. Tragically, as we all have learned over the past couple of years, this trend is actually intensifying in some parts of the world. This despicable ancient tool of war has resurfaced as a tactic of terrorism. It has become an integral part of recruitment, resourcing and radicalization, and above all, it is intended to instil fear in the hearts of local communities.

According to the Secretary General's report (S/2017/249), this terror tactic is being used not only by non-State actors, but also by national armed forces of States Memberes of the Organization. That is a dreadful thought. The report also offers practical recommendations for the Security Council, Member States and regional organizations on the important steps that must be taken by the international community. Those recommendations can no longer be ignored. Israel fully supports the recommendations and strongly encourages others to do the same.

The term "conflict-related sexual violence" is far too weak to actually describe the hell that women, men and children are forced to go through. It is our duty to speak against these horrors. It is what the people of the world demand of us. Silence is not an option in the face of rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization and forced marriages. These are the horrible realities of far too many around the world.

In territories controlled by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), women are being herded into pens, only to be later sold in open air markets in city centres. Young girls are given as trophies to fighters after they come back from the battlefield.

But we should make no mistake: in Syria Da'esh is not alone. The Syrian regime is also directly involved in the atrocities. According to the Secretary General's list of parties credibly suspected of committing or being

responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in conflict, the Syrian armed forces, the Syrian intelligence services and Syrian pro-Government forces have been using these savage tactics as well. In that context, I would also like to mention the fact that Iran, a notorious human rights violator and a promoter of global terror, is supporting the Syrian regime, thereby enabling it to avoid accountability for its crimes.

These barbaric acts have a devastating impact, not only on the victims themselves but also on entire communities and future generations. We need to think about the daughters and sons of women who have been sold as sex slaves: their mothers' trauma lingers with them. We must address this issue as well and make sure that all who have been affected receive the support they so desperately need.

One of the most disturbing aspects of this phenomenon is the fact that many cases go unreported. The reasons for that are clear — the fear of stigma, the fear of reprisals and a lack of avenues for redress prevent many from reporting what has been done to them or to their loved ones. We must help the victims break the wall of silence and make sure that they have legal recourse.

The international community has a collective responsibility to the victims of sexual violence in conflict. All of us — Governments, civil society and United Nations agencies — must work together to pass stronger laws, strengthen enforcement and introduce tougher penalties for offenders. People around the world demand concrete action. Victims of sexual violence in conflict cry out for help. We must act, and we must act now. The victims and survivors of sexual violence deserve nothing less.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Onn (Malaysia): We wish to express our appreciation to the Uruguayan presidency for convening this timely meeting. It is reflective of the commitment of the delegation of Uruguay to this important issue. We also wish to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Mina Jaf, representing the non-governmental organization Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their respective briefings. My delegation greatly appreciates their unflagging commitment to women's rights and empowerment in the pursuit of peace and security, and we pay tribute to their continued efforts in that regard.

We believe that tackling the question of sexual violence in armed conflict cannot be done in isolation. It requires the collective and concerted commitment and political will of all Members of the United Nations and the international community. Such commitment and will have been made all the more important in recent years as we have borne witness to sexual violence becoming a core element of the ideology and operations of extremist groups, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria.

The recent release of the 82 Chibok girls abducted by Boko Haram has provided some relief to their families. We believe that supporting those girls and their families must be at the forefront of any response. Equally important is ensuring that mechanisms and programmes are in place to facilitate the reintegration and rehabilitation of the abducted girls, victimized by such heinous acts, into their communities. Malaysia supports the intention to address conflict-related sexual violence in a broader, more systematic manner. While responses and reactions to the situation may provide short-term solutions, it is imperative that we look into preventive and corrective measures as a more sustained solution to the issue. Key to that would be to ride on the successfully renewed international momentum moving towards fully actualizing the involvement of women and leveraging their influence on matters of peace and security, following the high-level review of October 2015 (see S/PV.7533) and its accompanying global study of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) issued by UN-Women. Having said that, we agree with our briefers that ensuring women's participation in all peacebuilding efforts and increasing their participation in peacebuilding operations deserve the full support of all Member States.

We fully support efforts to increase and prioritize the participation of women at all levels in peace processes and mediation efforts. The peace process in Colombia showed us how significant the involvement of women, both at the main peace talks in Havana and in regional and national consultations, can be in supporting the successful conclusion of the initial peace agreement between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo. Increased access to gender expertise by international mediators and negotiating parties in the drafting of peace agreements, which has resulted in the inclusion of gender-specific provisions in a number

of agreements, is another positive development that should be sustained.

We also share the assessment that the presence of women peacekeepers in conflict zones can facilitate interaction and confidence-building with local communities and affected populations, particularly women and children. In addition to endorsing the three Ps — planning, pledges and performance — the London communiqué, adopted by the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial meeting last year, also affirmed the commitment to increase women's participation in uniformed roles. In that regard, I am pleased to share that, as of today, Malaysia has increased the number of women military personnel deployed within our contingent under the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon from 26 to 40. The Government of Malaysia is also currently taking steps to ensure that our contingent reaches the 15 per cent target of women military personnel deployed in Lebanon.

Additionally, my delegation would like to take the opportunity to advocate for mandatory predeployment training on child protection, in addition to training on sexual exploitation and abuse prevention, for all United Nations peacekeepers in support of the Secretary-General's initiative for troop- and police-contributing countries to issue certificates of compliance. Knowledge is the best defence and the importance of the provision of training for peacekeeping personnel cannot be overstated as a means of prevention.

Resolution 1325 (2000) recognized the need for a gender perspective to be taken into account in political, security and humanitarian action. While there has been some progress in mainstreaming gender considerations in the work of the United Nations, notably in the recent adoption of the Peacebuilding Commission's Gender Strategy, there is still a long way to go in fully implementing such policies. In that regard, Malaysia believes that increasing the number of women in decision-making positions contributes to the development and implementation of holistic and gender-inclusive policies that benefit the community, the State and the Organization as a whole.

The call made in resolution 1325 (2000) for the increased representation of women at all decision-making levels, remains as acute and relevant now as it was then, including within the United Nations. We continue to support the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve gender parity within the United Nations, especially at senior decision-making levels.

In conclusion, the women and peace and security agenda aspires to restore the role of women and girls, one half of humankind, as effective actors with an equal stake in peace and security efforts. Our task will be complete only when women's representation and participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution becomes axiomatic. Until then, my delegation offers its steadfast commitment and support to the furthering of this agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Mabunda Lioko (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on women and peace and security, and sexual violence in conflict. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; Mr. Adama Dieng, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Ms. Mina Jaf, Executive Director of Women's Refugee Route, as well as you, Mr. President, for your statements this morning.

We also wish to congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her nomination to serve as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as successor to Ms. Bangura, to whom we pay a sincere tribute for her exemplary work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the rest of the target countries.

As the President remarked, this debate is the appropriate venue for sharing our experiences and efforts with the United Nations since 2013 in the framework of the technical assistance provided. In that regard, while there is a link between the lack of physical security and sexual violence, history will never forget that eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo faced a decade of conflict and its attendant phenomenon of the rape of women. That has been the spark for our debate to this day. We will recall that rape, used as a war tactic, was often accompanied by other atrocious acts, as in the case of Walikale, mentioned this morning and to which I will refer later.

Two years ago in this forum, my country launched an initiative to strengthen the situation of Congolese women, and I am pleased to note that the killing of

women by Congolese citizens has gradually declined since 2013. Our country has engaged in this struggle by decreeing a zero-tolerance policy, which is no longer a mere slogan, and by setting an example at the highest level. Even the President of the Republic of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has sought to indicate this political will by creating the office I have led since 2014, which is an observatory to coordinate and facilitate various initiatives to counter sexual violence. We note that, despite the residual challenges, a defining turning point has been reached by our country, as recognized in resolutions 2277 (2016) and 2348 (2017) and in successive relevant reports of the Secretary-General since 2015.

But we can take nothing for granted. How do we go from past horrors to a beginning of post-confit normality? With the help of the United Nations, since the signing of the joint communiqué of 30 March, 2013, our Government has designed and deployed a plan of action to combat sexual violence. It has mobilized all the energies of the nation, especially the Ministries of Justice and National Defence, the defence and security forces, the General Auditorate, civil society organizations, and religious and traditional leaders. Much of this normalization programme is based on prevention, the fight against impunity and the socioeconomic response that I will address in this statement. Beyond technical principles and terms known to us all, these are lessons of humanity, experiments in living together, stories of distress or hope that we champion on a daily basis, claim as our own, and refuse to deny or stigmatize.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has enacted the law of 20 July 2006 and applies the Rome Statute, which punishes sexual violence. Consequently, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo adopted a campaign plan, led by the internal Specialized Commission for the Fight against Sexual Violence, which has been carrying out awareness-raising activities in all military camps for three years. The Commission is supported by the United Nations system.

The implementation of this plan of action has enabled the developmenet and signing of acts of solemn commitment by 218 commanders, including generals and colonels as well as 13,585 trained soldiers throughout all of the military camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are not only concerned about the eastern part in conflict, but about the 26 provinces, in order to ensure the sustainability of the culture of the fight against sexual violence. The Congolese national police is part of that dynamic, thereby reinforcing police capacities.

In order that women lead that fight, as they have been agents of change since 2014, four women have been promoted to the rank of general, which is extraordinary in Africa. One of them heads the army's civic education unit. In the wake of that a campaign known as "Breaking the Silence" was launched with a toll-free number to enable 22 million Congolese telecommunication subscribers in rural areas to report rape cases. From the outset of the campaign, more Congolese men were calling to denounce cases affecting their nieces or neighbours, which shows that Congolese men are supporting the women in eradicating the scourge.

Is that enough? Most certainly it is not. Yet it is a significant step. Such prevention efforts would be insufficient if not accompanied by pedagogical value. But the fight against impunity has been a triggering factor in our progress. Since 2015, our office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, has supported regular annual judicial inspections by senior judges who assess on the ground the recorded cases of sexual violence, including the manner and speed with which they are processed by civil and military courts throughout all of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — namely, our 146 territories.

Mobile courts are regularly scheduled by the Ministry of Justice in rural areas at the scene of the crime, with the support of the Government and at times specialized United Nations agencies. I cannot cite all of them, however the Office of the Special Representative and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights actively participate in mobilizing the rural courts.

As a result of those rounds, in 2016 throughout the national territory the military courts achieved 225 convictions, compared to 111 decisions in 2014, showing an increase of 50 per cent in three years. To note, the Arusha Criminal Court produced 90 decisions in 10 years, at the start of the new policy dealing with war crimes and international crimes.

To clarify any confusion about some of today's issues, turning to the military justice decisions, it is important to highlight and note that senior and other military commanders have been tried and convicted of rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — for example, the sentencing of General

Kakwavu in November 2014 and that of Colonels Engangela, known as the "Terminator", and Kibibi Mutware in 2015. That demonstrates that justice acts firmly to punish criminals, without regard to rank or position.

Furthermore, with regard to the emblematic cases cited in the Secretary-General's report, I will mention two: the case in Walikale, which was discussed this morning involving the warlord Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, and the case in Kavumu. The case of Walikale concerns mass rape committed by Sheka and his accomplices, including Captain Serafin Lionso. Captain Lionso was arrested and imprisoned in April 2016. We requested that he be transferred from the high security prison in Angenga, in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and brought before the military court in Goma, in the eastern part. The distance between the place of detention and the crime site is equal to the distance between the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. Such are the challenges we face each day.

On the other hand, with respect to the often cited rape cases involving the young children of Kavumu, the accused, a provincial official named Batumike, was arrested and his parliamentary immunity immediately waived in August 2016, in order to charge him. No one should be protected if he is the perpetrator of rape.

Today some Council members recommended that we document our best practices. I believe it is a good idea. Indeed, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has just published a compendium of military judicial decisions from 2010 to 2015, compiled in a document entitled *Bulletin of Decisions of the High Military Court*. That jurisprudence will provide a realistic and useful overview of the implementation of the fight against impunity on the ground, and of the challenges. While seeking to strengthen those achievements, our country is ready to share its experience with other countries in conflict affected by this scourge.

By way of example, we took part, along with the United Nations, in the appointment of a senior Congolese magistrate, formerly of the general auditor, Colonel Mutanzini, as Special Prosecutor to the Special Court of the Central African Republic. Furthermore, recently the Congolese special police unit for the protection of women and children was approached by the Government of the Central African Republic regarding the training of a special police unit in that area.

It is important to point out that intra-African solutions initiated by indigenous people are helpful in furthering progress in the struggle. We welcome the support of the African Union.

There is no need to punish the executioner; we must also look after the victims stigmatized by a socioeconomic response. We are proud to announce that thanks to the Governments of Japan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for two years we have been able to offer free apprenticeship training to 1,500 survivors of sexual violence and returned child soldiers. The unprecedented coalition of public institutions, private actors, NGOs and bilateral and multilateral development partners will ensure that our crusade's efforts in reaching out to all levels of society will have every chance of success.

Nevertheless, reparation and compensation for the victims remains a challenge. In response, on 3 April I went before the Parliament, accompanied by 130 Congolese NGOs, including those in non-conflict zones, to submit a draft bill to improve the compensation for victims.

Moreover, with respect to medical issues, we mourn the death of Dr. Byamungu, a colleague of Dr. Mukwege of Panzi Hospital. There are ongoing investigations. We continue, by way of public institutions and the Government's available resources, to support both public and private hospitals in providing better care to victims. That is what we are doing with Japan to enlarge the hospital in Kintambo. That is also what we did in 2016 with regard to the Karibuni Wamama Medical Centre and the non-governmental organization Solidarité féminine pour la paix et le développement intégral in Bunia.

All of those initiatives, we hope, will facilitate the gradual decline in cases of sexual violence even if we have not yet completely eliminated cases of rape.

Lastly, after its three years of work, I would like to acknowledge and commend the contribution of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and its group of experts for the excellent cooperation that allowed us to implement the joint communiqué with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the fight against sexual violence in conflict.

We must also thank all of those who, since 2014, have made the realization of that progress possible, showed no scepticism with regard to the good will of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and have remained by our side down that long road: the regional non-governmental organizations that joined us in the struggle; the Congolese Government, which, despite security-related constraints, has allocated a specific budget for our office's work since 2014; and the Government of Japan, either directly or through the intermediary of the Office of the Special Representative, in collaboration with UN-Women and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

It is perhaps that collaborative work that has led to the decline of reported cases of sexual violence in the successive reports of the Secretary-General. We went from 15,352 cases reported in 2013 to 1,734 in 2016 — an 85 per cent decrease in three years. That is not a victory but the beginning of something that is attributable to the will of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the active synergy of our helpful partners standing alongside us. It is no accident. It is the result of hard, daily work and an example of collective will manifested at the highest levels of the State.

In the light of that report, we reiterate the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue the struggle to provide additional rights and an increased sense of peace and well-being to the women of that country who were once humiliated by unpunished rapes.

In that regard, my country will welcome with interest, during 2017-2108, technical discussions more focused on a precise road map pertaining to consolidating the progress made with a view towards delisting scenarios.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First, allow me to thank Uruguay for organizing today's debate and choosing the theme of sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism, the importance of which has become self-evident owing to its urgency, acuteness and impact on societies. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Acting Special Representative Adama Dieng for their respective briefings this morning, as well as Ms. Mina Jaf as a representative of civil society.

At all times and regardless of the victims, violence is always reprehensible. However, sexual violence in times of conflict is even more so. We strongly condemn such practices, which date back to another era that still persists today. Today's debate is a forceful and eloquent illustration of the phenomenon. As evidence, we need only cite the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council that have followed resolution 1325 (2000), as well as resolution 2331 (2016).

There is no doubt about it: Da'esh, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and many other terrorist groups mentioned in the report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General use sexual violence as a tactic of war, a weapon of terror and a source of financial revenue used to augment their resources and augment their power. They openly advocate those practices, which figure prominently among their strategic objectives and ideologies. No woman, girl, man or boy is spared. Women and girls suffer the most from the devastating consequences of conflicts and pay a heavy price because of their increased vulnerability. They are now offered up as the spoils of war. For their part, men and boys are often subjected to forced labour, domestic slavery, trafficking in human organs and even sexual exploitation. Sexual violence does not only affect the victims, it eats away at and rots communities and societies to their very core. Its goal is to hurt the body, tear down dignity, destroy the social fabric and obliterate reconstruction efforts from the onset. It destabilizes, destroys and terrorizes societies affected by conflicts. Those who commit such heinous crimes must be brought to justice and sentenced with the maximum punishment.

My country, which is a member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, chaired by Canada, and the Group of Friends for Gender Parity, led by Colombia, which adopted the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, subscribes to its international commitments to combat all forms of sexual violence, including in times of conflict, and considers them barbaric, brutal and inhuman methods and practices, having serious consequences on the process of achieving lasting peace and reconciliation.

Because of the systematic and premeditated nature of acts of sexual violence, there is an urgent need for innovations to counter that scourge. In its firm devotion to international law, Morocco is committed to encouraging an inclusive approach to combating sexual violence that takes into account the complexity of the

causes of that scourge, as well as the interests and needs of the persons concerned. It is an approach that calls for strong measures concerning accountability for all those who continue to act in defiance of international humanitarian law, human rights law and the Geneva Conventions. Moreover, it is essential that we alter the stigmatization of victims of sexual violence and the children born as the result of such violence.

In conclusion, protection, prevention and the fight against impunity must be our watchwords. It is our collective responsibility and duty. International law, including international humanitarian law, must be applied without exception. It is incumbent upon us to protect and respond to the needs of victims, prevent sexual violence and ensure that the perpetrators of those violations are held fully accountable for their actions. It is high time to invest in peace, give victims back their dignity and make planning for the reconstruction of societies and lasting peace a reality.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres — the author of the new United Nations approach for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, as outlined in his report (A/71/818), which prioritizes the rights and dignity of victims and calls for the establishment of a zero-tolerance policy. We are confident that that new strategy will bring change.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cambodia.

Mr. Yaung Chan (Cambodia): Allow me to express my sincere congratulations to Uruguay, and especially to you, Sir, on your assumption to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May, as well as to thank you for organizing this extremely important debate.

My delegation would like to thank His Excellency the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/249) on conflict-related sexual violence, as well as his tireless efforts to improving the plight of victims of these international crimes.

My delegation shares the concerns expressed by many delegations in the Security Council today. We are troubled by the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism. That is a despicable act. Yet that form of violence is on the rise globally and is well documented.

The Secretary-General's report notes that sexual violence is used strategically to terrorize populations into compliance, incentivize the recruitment of fighters and generate revenue as part of the shadow economy of conflict and terrorism. Those are troubling developments that cannot be tolerated by the international community. The Royal Government of Cambodia strongly condemn all forms of violence and sexual exploitation perpetrated by non-State armed groups against religious and ethnic minorities, especially women and children. The international community must pay careful attention to that disturbing tactic of terror used to do to dehumanize, humiliate and subjugate entire populations, particularly women and children. We must strengthen the existing legal instruments for the protection of women and girls in armed conflict. To that end, the reports of the Secretary-General, and other documents that make recommendations, should be based on clear, accurate, verifiable data, resulting in reports that will inform our understanding and actions and thereby help to strengthen the rule of law at the national and international level. Furthermore, in order to combat the victimization of women and girls, we must address the underlying causes of conflict. Conflict prevention is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and respect for human rights. Since the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the United Nations, the international community must address the root causes of conflict in a comprehensive, purposeful and determined way.

For its part, the Royal Government of Cambodia is deeply committed to fighting the spread of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and is cooperating with the Association for Southeast Asian Nations and the States Members of the United Nations, as well as United Nations agencies, sparing no effort to address threats to women's security. In order to contribute to global peace and security, my Government has participated actively in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

At times, regrettably, peacekeeping duties demand the highest sacrifice from those who serve. Most recently, as those here may be aware and as has been condemned by the Security Council, a United Nations convoy in the Central African Republic was attacked last week by armed elements, resulting in the deaths of four peacekeepers from Cameroon and one from Morocco. My Prime Minister has said that non-violence should be at the heart of every human being, and has called for peace and strongly urged the Organization to consider measures that can ensure the protection of United Nations peacekeepers in conflict areas in Syria.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Cambodia is resolved to protect vulnerable populations and their rights in situations of armed conflict. Eliminating sexual violence against men, women, boys and girls requires joint global action, and Cambodia is committed to that effort in order to end people's victimization by extremist groups and terrorist organizations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Maldives.

Ms. Zahir (Maldives): At the outset, I would like to thank the Uruguayan presidency for convening this important and timely open debate. I would also like to express our appreciation to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the briefers for their updates and dedicated efforts on this issue. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2017/249) on this topic, issued last month, which makes clear both the scale and the significance of the challenges we must now consider.

As so vividly described in the Secretary-General's report and by those who have addressed the Security Council today, sexual violence has increasingly become part of the toolbox of terror with which armed groups seek to consolidate their influence and extend their power at the expense of those who are exposed to their predations. Indeed, while sexual violence is often closely linked to gender-based violence, its victims include men and boys as well as women and girls. It is often the case that those who deign to use sexual violence as a tool in conflict see neither gender nor age as any hindrance. That is even more the case with terrorist and violent extremist groups. Some, such as Da'esh, even use the prospect of being able to commit such acts as part of their recruitment strategy.

With that stark reality in mind, the Maldives believes that the United Nations, and especially the Security Council, should comprehensively adapt its prevention, protection and recovery efforts to the increasingly asymmetric threats posed by non-State, extremist and terrorist armed groups through sexual violence. The Maldives welcomes resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2331 (2016), which make clear the Council's recognition of the fact that sexual violence is frequently used as a tactic of terrorism and provide a clear starting point for deepening the strategic alignment of efforts against sexual violence, both across the United Nations and among Member States. They make it clear that the obligations to abide by the protections afforded by international human rights law apply to State and non-State actors alike, and that it is incumbent on all parties to respect their provisions.

In that regard, the Maldives welcomes and fully endorses the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Security Council employ all means at its disposal to ensure that all parties to a conflict comply with international law regarding protection against sexual violence. In turn, that should be enforced through the systematic monitoring of compliance, the implementation of legislative and institutional arrangements and, when violations do occur, by referring matters to the International Criminal Court.

While people of both genders are very much at risk of being targeted for abuse, it goes without saying that the burden of sexual violence in conflict falls overwhelmingly and disproportionately on women and girls. In that context, the Maldives would like to recall resolution 1325 (2000), which has been a landmark guide for efforts to ensure women's full involvement and equal participation in all elements of the peace and security framework, including conflict prevention, humanitarian response and peacekeeping efforts. Resolution 1325 (2000) also makes clear the importance of ensuring that all parties to a conflict, again including non-State parties, remove women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual violence. This resolution provides a strong foundation for our efforts in that regard, and is a natural starting point for developing ways to reinforce existing mechanisms and explore new avenues through which we can protect civilians against the threat of sexual violence.

The Maldives also fully supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse and exploitation by United Nations peacekeepers, and encourages the Security Council to include tasks related to women, peace and security in peacekeeping mission mandates. In that spirit, the Government of the Maldives has pledged a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of gender-based violence. We have also enacted laws prohibiting sexual harassment and abuse and on sexual offences, domestic violence prevention and social protection in our efforts to raise awareness and create the fundamental provisions necessary for the protection of all women and girls. In 2016 we enacted a gender equality bill that contains comprehensive provisions that further strengthen article 17 (a) of our Constitution, which entitles rights and freedoms to

everyone without discrimination of any kind, including with regard to race, national origin, sex, age, mental or physical disability.

Renewed and reinvigorated action at the local, regional and international levels alike is needed to protect and empower the victims of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. Given the heinousness of such acts, it is essential, if we are to remain credible as an Organization, that the United Nations and its Member States be especially vigilant and adhere to the standards of zero tolerance and the highest probity on the matter. The Maldives is strongly committed to deepening its cooperation with international partners in that regard, and wherever possible pledges to continue offering its support so that every woman, man and child, whatever their situation, can have the chance to determine their own future and realize their own aspirations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Koroma (Sierra Leone): At the outset, I would like to commend you, Mr. President, and your country, Uruguay, for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security in relation to sexual violence in conflict. I would also like to commend Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women for their initiatives.

Sierra Leone is pleased to once more join other Member States in deliberating on this all-important subject. We wish to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the outgoing Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and her team for their excellent work in raising global awareness on the subject of sexual violence in conflict and giving voice to the voiceless. We also want to register our support to her successor, Ms. Patten. My delegation looks forward to working with her in the years to come to fulfil her mandate.

Sierra Leone joins all peace-loving nations of the world in strongly condemning all forms of violence perpetrated against women in conflict situations. This menace is a threat to international peace and security and must be taken seriously. We also strongly maintain that perpetrators must be held to account for any kind of violence committed against women in conflict situations, for the days of impunity are over. They must not find any hiding place in any part of the world. The use of sexual violence by terrorist groups, violent extremists and other non-State actors must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. Perpetrators of sexual violence can be defeated only by global action and collaboration. No State can do it alone.

As Council members may be aware, Sierra Leone suffered 11 years of an intensely violent civil conflict, and a lot of atrocities were committed against women. Since the guns fell silent in January 2002, the country has been making steady socioeconomic progress, consolidating peace and good governance. The lessons learnt from that war have strengthened our resolve to embrace the values of a peaceful society in which respect for the rule of law and women's rights is given priority.

The setting up of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has been succeeded by the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone — which currently has in custody those who bore the greatest responsibility — remains a vivid demonstration of the resolve of the international community and the Government of Sierra Leone to ensure accountability for horrendous crimes, including sexual violence in conflict.

No effort should be spared by the United Nations to invest resources in identifying early-warning signs of conflict and conflict prevention, because women, girls and children are usually the targets in conflicts situations. It is very important to note that in the discussions of sexual violence in conflict here at the United Nations, women should be given more opportunity to participate in the highest decision-making bodies. Also, the capacities of countries emerging from conflict must be enhanced, particularly in the area of conflict prevention and institutional capacity-building. The need to invest in women's development towards our present-day aspiration for global, regional and national development cannot be overemphasized. Sierra Leone strongly upholds the relevant protocols relating to women's empowerment, including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence against Women.

The Government of Sierra Leone continues to enact several post-conflict policy and legislative frameworks aimed at addressing gender inequalities, lack of respect for women's rights and other negative traditional norms affecting women. Key among these include the Gender Justice Laws or the Three Gender Acts. These exemplify our resolve to attain gender equality and empower women. Sierra Leone continues to make modest contributions to international peacekeeping

missions. Our contingents of troops are given the requisite training in the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and have performed admirably. We look forward to more opportunities to be given to our troops to serve humankind.

Allow me to reaffirm Sierra Leone's commitment to all international instruments aimed at ending violence against women and girls, and to reaffirm the importance of education, economic empowerment, and the modification of social and cultural patterns of behaviour of men and boys towards women and girls as integral parts of overcoming violence against women and girls, both in conflict and in post-conflict situations.

In conclusion, the fight to end sexual violence against women and girls in conflict cannot be achieved unless there is an effective, efficient and credible international legal institution that is able to bring to book those who have perpetrated and continue to perpetrate horrendous crimes against the vulnerable and defenceless, including women, girls and children in conflict situations. In that regard, my delegation continues to support the International Criminal Court, which remains at the moment the most effective international legal institution that is supposed to address impunity.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge the good work of Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women and to pledge our unflinching support and solidarity with them in the fight against impunity for sexual violence in conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Djibouti.

Mr. Moussa (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): First, my delegation would like to extend its warm congratulations to your country, Sir, on assuming the monthly presidency of the Security Council. This occasion also gives me the opportunity to hail the quality and relevance of the concept note (S/2017/402, annex) for our debate today on sexual violence in conflict used as a tactic of war and terrorism. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) provides us with a basis for a fruitful debate in this respect.

We also welcome the briefings made by Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, and Mr. Adama Dieng, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

Djibouti strongly condemns these atrocities, which affect mostly women and children, and calls on all actors in conflict to strictly comply with internationally recognized principles of human rights and humanitarian law. Djibouti firmly condemns the use of such violence by non-State actors. We therefore wish to commend the tireless efforts of the Nigerian Government following the release of 82 high-school students from the town of Chibok after three years of captivity at the hands of Boko Haram. We also hope that all arrangements will be made to ensure their care as long as it proves necessary. We call on the people and the brotherly Government of Nigeria to pursue their efforts to find the other high-school girls who remain missing to this day, and express our full solidarity with them.

Under the impetus of numerous international initiatives and resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda, which emerged from the deteriorating situation of women in conflict and post-conflict situations in the 1990s, the adoption and implementation of resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and, most recently, 2331 (2016) confirm the ongoing determination of the international community to combat by all means sexual violence as a tactic war and terrorism.

The impact on the victims cannot be overemphasized, either in the case of rape, trafficking in human beings, sexual slavery, prostitution or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, directly or indirectly related to conflict. These horrors, generally committed against women and children, engender all sorts of pathologies and disorders, compounding the other impacts of the wounds and scars previously caused by serious situations of vulnerability, such as migration, forced displacement, war or simply long-standing precarious living conditions. In particular, children exposed to such cruel treatment may develop destructive behavioural patterns in the future because, as psychologists and traumatologists point out, children in danger are dangerous children. Lives torn apart and spirits broken — that is the fate that awaits them. Because of the devastating and destructive nature of such violations in times of war, firm responses are needed from the international community.

First, the international community must be firm in implementing international norms to protect women. To that end, priority must be given to taking concrete steps in the field and ensuring that they are focused on prevention, detection and early warning. An increased

number of advisers specialized in the areas of women's rights protection and gender-related issues must be deployed in the field, with the consent host countries.

Secondly, in order to be more efficient, we believe that reporting on the number of victims is useful as it assists in determining subsequent steps that must be taken to ensure ongoing care for victims. The series of reports all indicate that the figures quoted are always far removed from the true numbers. That is an area that can gain more visibility by highlighting the obstacles that must be overcome to eliminate such violence. Despite the scope of resolution 1325 (2000), more action must be taken. Since its adoption, more than 15 years ago, women's leadership and participation have remained negligible, although undeniable progress has been made. Women's priorities are still not adequately reflected in peace talks and agreements. We would like to reaffirm the relevance of resolution 1325 (2000), which includes unquestionable comparative advantages.

Finally, Djibouti welcomes the Secretary-General's initiatives to achieve visible and quantifiable improvements in preventing and suppressing sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by United Nations peacekeepers and personnel. Djibouti monitors that issue closely in the negotiations currently under way. We fully support the zero-tolerance policy adopted by the General Assembly. However, the establishment of two offices — one for victims' rights advocates and another for the Special Coordinator — should be used, along with existing mechanisms, to reduce and prevent the duplication of effort, given the Organization's limited human and financial resources. Strengthening the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations must also be at the core of those strategies.

In conclusion, Djibouti welcomes the fact that the international community has made this issue a priority. We also firmly believe that it will help us to move further along the path to a more humane and peaceable future.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: Having come to the end of the list of speakers, I would like to thank the interpreters for their work and for remaining with us throughout.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.